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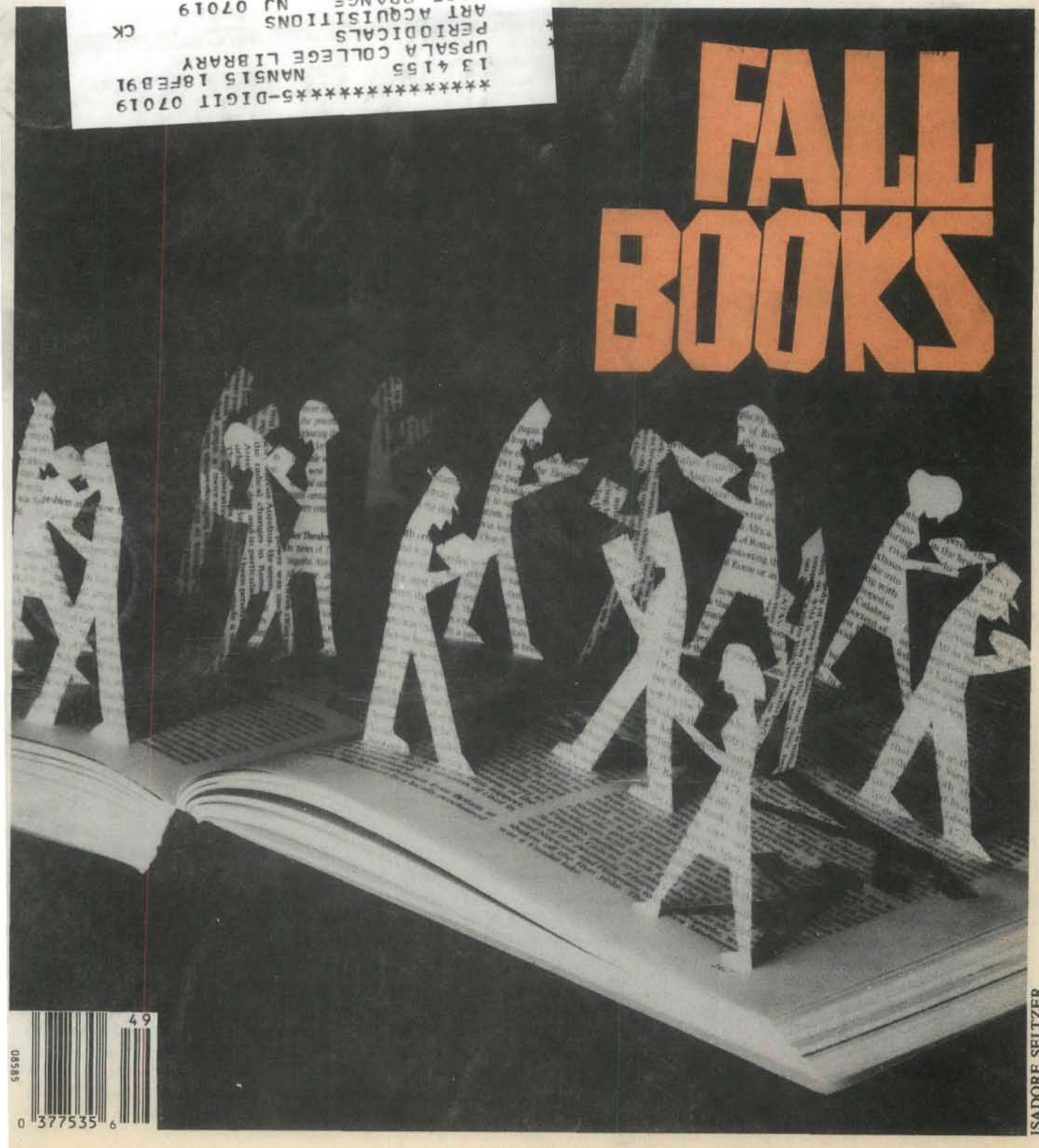

ISADORE SELTZER

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LETTERS.

FEAT OF CLAY

New York City

I do not believe that *The Nation* has managed to run a story about Andrew Dice Clay without mentioning homophobia ["As Nasty as He Wants to Be," Oct. 8]. Gay men and lesbians have been pretty invisible in *The Nation*, but not even to mention them when they are an important part of the story seems very odd. Andrew Dice Clay has lost Geffen Records distribution largely through the efforts of gay men. We're here, we're queer, do deal with it. *Peter Sperling*

DICEY MAN

Pelham, Mass.

What is the story with male *Nation* writers flacking for pop-culture woman-haters in an effort to prove their own ultra-hip political correctness? First there was Christopher Hitchens eager to demonstrate what an *au fait* ofay he is with his apologia for the misogynistic rapismo of 2 Live Crew ["Minority Report," July 30/Aug. 6]. And now we have Fredric Paul Smoler unzipping and whipping out his class consciousness in a ludicrous analysis that anoints Andrew Dice Clay as the comic voice of the downtrodden guido. So Clay's verbal degrading of women is just a case of doin' to the banker's daughter what the banker does to us, is that the idea? Victimizing women is O.K. as long as the victimizer is himself an ethnic and/or economic victim? Hitchens and Smoler play a dirty game when their disregard for women goes masquerading as social awareness.

Charles C. Smith

SMOLER REPLIES

New York City

Andrew Dice Clay's orthodox homophobic assertions (that homoerotic desire is inconceivable) are twice subverted by tacit admissions of homoerotic desire, but that is the only even mildly complicated thing I noticed about the Diceman's homophobia, and as my article sought to illuminate Clay's audience, not remark on his viciousness, I didn't think my observation worth including. Simply adverting to Clay's homophobia is not helpful to *Nation* readers, and to expend column inches demonstrating my political piety by belaboring the obvious is to waste time.

Charles C. Smith thinks I believe that "victimizing women is O.K. as long as the victimizer is himself a . . . victim." Since I do not hold that belief and do not see how Smith concluded that I do, I am not sure how to respond. I do believe that some of Clay's material provides intriguing evidence of his audience's "class consciousness," to use the phrase Smith has purloined from a tradition in which such things were generally thought worth investigating.

Smith refers to my "playing a *dirty game*." That fossil cliché seems to have retained none of its traditional range of meanings in Smithese. I do not think that even Clay's more tin-eared auditors are playing a "dirty game"; they are not interested parties masking sinister moves but people with insufficient curiosity about and less empathy for some of our less fashionable subaltern classes.

Now, about the accusation of "ultra-hip political correctness," I would define that as an incapacity to read, listen or think over the din of one's own noisy exultation in left pieties and canting abuse. Avoiding it is difficult, perhaps even more difficult than Smith yet realizes. *Fredric Paul Smoler*

OYÉ!

Berkeley, Calif.

Thank you for Hal Gelb's accurate article on Berkeley Rep. and the S.F. Mime Troupe ["Theater," Oct. 15]. I have long been hoping that *The Nation* would begin to cover Bay Area theater, particularly since local theater critics, with the exception of Robert Hurwitt writing in the *East Bay Express*, range from fair to execrable and exhibit no awareness of the theater as a politically important entity. That you have begun such coverage, and with a piece so politically subtle as Gelb's, is indeed encouraging. More, please. *Rick Foster*

AMANDLA!

San Francisco

I have never "taken it for granted that apartheid is dead," as Hal Gelb's article suggests, and I resent having my review of Berkeley Repertory Theatre's *Born in the RSA* lumped in with whatever other less well-informed criticism Gelb may have in mind.

"To varying degrees," Gelb writes, "the locals [theater critics for San Francisco Bay Area dailies] denounced the script . . . as dated and without purpose." In the passage that Gelb must be recalling, I wrote: "When a theater is on the front lines of current events, five years can make a gigantic difference. Conditions in South Africa may remain nearly as dire as *Born in the RSA* reports. Yet it's impossible not to sense that Mandela's release and the government's gestures toward compromise have begun to alter the equations of South African power in ways that the play doesn't, and couldn't, address."

It would take effortful misconstruction, if not a secret decoder ring, to read "apartheid is dead" into those sentences. I was writing about changes in the climate of expectation that affects what feels urgent on stage. Gelb has every right to disagree with my judgment of the show—but none to misrepresent it.

Scott Rosenberg
San Francisco Examiner

GELB REPLIES

Oakland, Calif.

Thanks to Rick Foster for the kind words.

Regarding Scott Rosenberg's resentment at having been inappropriately lumped, I have to point out that he is quoting himself out of context. I was referring to the paragraph he quotes *and* the one following, in which he concludes his article by saying, "Today, however, history in the RSA actually seems to be stuttering toward saying something new." That statement may be more cautious than those of some of his colleagues, but no decoder ring is needed to read it as a pronouncement of apartheid's imminent demise. It sums up his discussion of Mandela's release and the government's accommodating gestures. I also had in mind the topic sentence Rosenberg drops from the paragraph he quotes: "In the end, more than its aesthetic weaknesses, what limits the impact of *Born in the RSA* is its lack of timeliness."

My argument, at least initially, is not with Rosenberg's judgment of the play but with his limited appreciation of its content. His review doesn't recognize some of the factors the play focuses on that may now play an important role in determining the country's future. He barely mentions the Dumisani plot, although it takes up a good part of the evening, and it's here the play suggests that the brutalization of black children, who have become freedom fighters (but aren't necessarily loyal to Mandela), may be the most important influence on what happens in South Africa. He also doesn't discuss the polarization of whites in the play. Rosenberg describes the student who drifts into informing for the police as "pretty much untouched by his experiences." This is a character who moves all the way from getting on with blacks to believing at the end that the young ones are going to burn the place down and the only reasonable response is to abandon society and to go live in nature.

As I said in my review, the play does, however briefly, try to address the effect Mandela's release may have, but its outlook is not wholly sanguine. Rosenberg misses that, too. He senses a disjunction between the characters' cry of "Amandla!" and the projection of Mandela's photograph on the one hand and the "grinding bureaucratic injustices we've just witnessed" on the other, but he takes it as a weakness of the play rather than as an expression of its viewpoint.

Instead of joining the chorus singing the play's lack of timeliness, had Rosenberg been as informed as he assures us he is, he might have advised his readership, "Here is a play that will put the current general euphoria about South Africa into perspective and reward you with an awareness of some less-publicized factors influencing the changes that will take place." *Hal Gelb*

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EDITORIALS.

Antiwar Voices

The roller coaster ride plotted by President Bush to rip public opinion from its moorings and allow the Administration to have its way—any way—with Iraq seems to be having the wrong effect. The mood in Washington changes minute by minute, from patriotic frenzy to soothing diplomatic sanity, as radical military escalations are followed by reassurances of peace. The idea is to create so much confusion that rational public response is impossible. And yet antiwar sentiment has begun to develop despite Bush's crazy conduct. Not yet a movement and still unsure of its principles, the antiwar attitude is clearly more than a media moment, and it could quickly grow into a campaign capable of keeping the country out of war.

The sturdily centrist news media have perceptibly, if undramatically, turned against the idea of an unprovoked or pre-emptive invasion of Iraq. Unassailable figures such as Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf, commander of U.S. forces

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in the Persian Gulf, turn up in interviews warning of the dire consequences of war. Weighty talk shows such as *Nightline* and the *MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour* now regularly include antiwar advocates as diverse as Jesse Jackson and former Secretary of the Navy James Webb. Even *Donahue* has become a center of pacifist advocacy. Prodded by FAIR (Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting), which has carefully documented the networks' predilection for white male militarists, producers for the shows have booked Noam Chomsky, Edward Said, Richard Barnet, Ralph Nader and others where once Henry Kissinger and his cadre dominated the chat. The shows have actually created a market for opposition. Senator Robert Kerrey of Nebraska gets hours of network time because he is one of the few senators willing to take even a moderate stand against war.

Unlike the last time, the antiwar effort is starting in the center, rather than at the radical edges of politics. Catholic bishops went on record this month against U.S. aggressive action; during the early days of the Vietnam era, the Catholic hierarchy was a major supporter of the war party. The respectability of antiwar opposition will make the movement easier to sell to ordinary Americans, but it will also skew its meaning and make it harder for everyone to draw the necessary connections between foreign and domestic policy and historical precedents.

It is therefore crucial for the "radical edges" to insist the connections be made. Jesse Jackson tried on *MacNeil/Lehrer* to talk about Panama, South Africa and the Palestinians in the same breath as Iraq, but Robert MacNeil cut him off. As strong as some mainstream editorials have been about the gulf, they avoid the issue of imperial militarism in the post-cold war world and the role of the United States as master of the world's essential resources. In other words, a squeamish or temporarily cautious center may be able to delay or postpone this "resource war," but it will take a much larger and more progressive movement to stop the wars down the line.

To the Death

The bell that has been tolling for twenty years for newspapers and their unions around the nation is now ringing thunderously in New York City. Its peal could be the death knell of at least one of the city's four major dailies and cause further hemorrhaging of the union movement. Nine of the ten unions that make up the Allied Printing Trades Council have been on strike against the *Daily News* since late October.

The Allied says that annihilation of the unions is the ultimate goal of the Chicago-based Tribune Company, which owns the *News*. The conglomerate hired the notorious unionbusting law firm of King & Ballow to conduct the negotiations, imported "security guards" and introduced a series of demands seeking to end what it claimed were labor abuses, such as featherbedding and excessive overtime.

The unions denounced the demands as givebacks that would wipe out collective-bargaining gains made over decades, but management increased pressure by taking a variety of provocative actions. These included the hiring of replacement workers kept in the wings, ready to follow in the footsteps of replacements at Eastern Airlines, Greyhound and in air traffic control, where strikes as an effective labor weapon have been neutralized. An ad hoc action after a worker was reprimanded enabled management to declare a strike and rush in the scabs. The *News* now publishes daily even in the face of an A.F.L.-C.I.O.-backed boycott of the paper and its advertisers and a sometimes violent campaign on the streets to keep papers from reaching newsstands.

It's a war of attrition that both sides claim they'll win. Professor Ester Fuchs, a fiscal and labor analyst at Barnard College, points out that in the current climate, unions can no longer count on public support of a boycott even in New York, with its heavy enrollment in municipal unions. Many of the *News* replacement workers are minorities, as are a great many in the municipal unions, and she wonders whether union loyalties will prevail over racial ones.

"The union picture for newspapers seems to get more grim all the time," says Ben Bagdikian, author of *The Media Monopoly* and professor emeritus of the Graduate School of Journalism at the University of California, Berkeley. For the past twenty years, he said, the newspaper industry has developed highly effective techniques of unionbusting; as a result, most of the nation's daily newspapers have either no unions or very weak ones. The national method includes actions that twenty years ago might have been called unfair labor practices by the National Labor Relations Board but not today, given the N.L.R.B.'s pro-management stance.

"Management goads the unions into a strike and then the unions are confronted with an impossible decision," Bagdikian says. "If they accept the really draconian offers of management they will go under, and if they go on strike they will probably be replaced and the unions will not exist. They face very tough times because of that, and in New York we see it being played out on a large, spectacular scale."

And, as Fuchs notes, the rest of the nation, rightly or wrongly, perceives New York as more pro-union than other cities. Thus if the Tribune Company wins in New York, "it will have tremendous ramifications across the country in terms of what management thinks it can get away with in dealing with unions."

The unions are fully aware of the implications. Tom Pennacchio, secretary-treasurer of Local 3 of the Newspaper Guild, says defiantly, "I don't think they're going to make it. They can't with scab labor. Labor will not allow them to make it. If we do, we're dead." But the Tribune Company is prepared to fight to the death—the unions' or the *News*'s—because either way, the company will improve its bottom line. The Allied hopes to make its boycott so expensive for the company that it will engage in honest negotiations. But if the *News* goes under, New York will at least send a message to the rest of the country that strikebreaking can be very costly.

GENE RUFFINI

Gene Ruffini is a veteran New York City reporter who has written extensively on labor matters.

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The Hitler Caper

The national press has gone home and talk among students is muted, but as the first snow falls in Hanover, people are still puzzled over who inserted a passage from *Mein Kampf* into the masthead of *The Dartmouth Review* on the eve of Yom Kippur. The question has become the *Review*'s version of Who killed Laura Palmer?—a ratings booster for a hate sheet that relies on off-campus readers and funders for support.

Editors of the right-wing *Review* still maintain it was a case of criminal sabotage, but though a few weeks ago they claimed to be ready to name the "mole" responsible, they have instead demurred, quietly closing their internal investigation and turning the matter over to local police.

The investigation has taken some curious Twin Peaksian turns of its own, as accusers dissolve into accused and police worry about being used as pawns. Not long ago suspicion was said to rest on a staff writer, one of four members of the *Review* to resign in disgust after the incident. In the early days of the controversy he had been yanked from his bed and interrogated all night by *Review* editors. His decision to sleep that night, while other staffers were in a panic, was viewed with distrust by the editors. They hired a private investigator, and, according to Dartmouth professor Jeffrey Hart, the *Review*'s adviser and a senior editor at *National Review*, the gumshoe fingered the staff writer as the "saboteur." He said the young man had been angry because some of his articles were rejected this past summer. Now police say the *Review* never even mentioned its internal investigation when it asked for their help.

"We're looking more carefully at the complainants than at their suspects," a police officer said privately. The only piece of evidence—an uncurved apostrophe in the phrase "By warding off the Jews I am fighting for the Lord's work"—is discounted by police as the result of haste. *Review* editors had insisted it betrayed an outside hand, one unfamiliar with the paper's computer system. "Garbage," said a departed *Review* member who was the paper's computer expert. "That's a smokescreen." The *Review* has a specialized computer program to which only insiders have access.

Meanwhile, the one clear casualty is the college. As Dartmouth president James Freedman dukes it out in the press with *Review* backers like former Treasury Secretary William Simon, whose foundation has given the paper nearly $300,000 over the past ten years, the focus on campus is damage control. There is real concern here that long after details of the most recent affair are forgotten, Dartmouth will still be synonymous with intolerance. The attacks on William Cole, a black music professor who resigned this year after seven years of harassment from the *Review*, and the sledgehammering of campus antiapartheid shanties in 1986 are events with staying power.

The school's admissions department is emphasizing its "Take Dartmouth Home" campaign this holiday season, urging students to go to their hometown high schools to encourage prospective applicants and explain that the *Review* is not the campus paper. But the P.R. efforts may be in vain. The number of blacks applying has diminished, and, in a setback to the school's plan for greater diversity, the Rockefeller Foundation rejected Dartmouth's request for money to recruit minority women professors. The school has a poor track record in keeping such teachers.

Michael Dorris, a professor of anthropology and Native American studies, said that defending the school to other academics has become a full-time, and futile, occupation. Commenting on a recent conference, he wrote in the Dartmouth campus newspaper: "Of course I told them the truth: that the real Dartmouth isn't hostile to ethnic or religious minorities, women or gay students [and] that we are a diverse community whose very belief in the principle of free speech permitted *The Dartmouth Review*'s excesses. The problem is, nobody believed a word of it." ALEXIS JETTER

Alexis Jetter is a former New York Newsday *reporter now living in Vermont.*

★

An Incumbent's Interpretation of the 1990 Congressional Elections

You'd felt a chill,
Perhaps because you'd never introduced a bill.
(It's true that you can't find your way around the Hill.)
But somehow your constituents support you still.

Such bracing news!
It means that if you're noted for repulsive views
Or standing on the floor of Congress soaked with booze,
Unless you get yourself arrested you can't lose.

You should get by.
Yes, even if they say that you personify
The sort of hack who'll let your richest backer buy
Not just your vote—your coat, your shirt, your tie.

Oh, they'll attack
But your campaign has pockets that they tend to lack:
A challenger can rarely match you PAC for PAC.
And that's the reason you'll be going back and back.

And back.
And back.
And back.

Calvin Trillin

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BEAT THE DEVIL.

Bedtime for Bosco

"If I'd been a better writer," Elias Canetti told his diary in 1941, "I'd have stopped the war." I've always liked the spirit of this remark, particularly after elections. A few more columns and the voters would have seen it my way.

East of the Rockies the victories of Sanders in Vermont and Wellstone in Minnesota are properly brandished as evidence that economic radicalism plus enthusiastic local activists can bring results. In California one silver lining was along the Northcoast, running from above Marin to the Oregon line, in the 1st Congressional District. The incumbent was Doug Bosco, a Democrat running for a fifth term, who long ago lost his allure as a friend to the environment, clasping instead the corporate dollar—offshore oil, timber, an S&L loan—to his bosom.

Bosco's most pertinacious foe throughout most of his incumbency was Mendocino County's *Anderson Valley Advertiser*, the Boonville-based weekly with a spirited anticorporate outlook and readers aroused from political narcolepsy by real language, much of it very amusing, that describes real people, many of them known to these readers personally, doing all the usual horrible things.

Bosco faced not only a Republican, Frank Riggs, but also Darlene Comingore of the Peace and Freedom Party. Comingore was ignored for most of her campaign by the local press, including the Santa Rosa *Press Democrat* (owned by *The New York Times*), but got plenty of ink from the *Advertiser*, which continued to savage the errant Bosco. She ended up with 31,505 votes, draining enough support from Bosco to give Riggs a victory by nearly 2,000 votes. In his low-key race for state rep the *Advertiser*'s editor, Bruce Anderson, got nearly 16,000 votes, certainly a lot more than other editors in the country could hope to rack up, assuming any of them would dare to place their names before the voters.

The Northcoast somewhat resembles Vermont, being thinly populated and having plenty of radicals and countercultural types. In statewide races the Peace and Freedom Party averaged about 2 percent. Comingore took 15 percent, partly because of the *Advertiser*'s robust attacks on the "hold your nose and vote for Bosco" posture. Riggs may be no angel—reading back into time he's been a developer, a cop and an M.P.—but he's better than Bosco on the environment, opposing offshore oil drilling and the export of rough-cut timber. Both he and the next Democratic challenger will have that third-party threat to worry about.

Rebellion in the backlands . . . As things are, I sometimes think a third party will be sparked by the spontaneous combustion of sheer desperation. The day after the elections a Democratic "moderate" was calling for a presidential candidate who "has the gravitas of Nunn, the discipline of Robb, the ability to deliver a values message of Clinton and the stamina and campaigning ability of Gephardt"—i.e., the Identikit equivalent of chloroform. They'll never learn, will they?

The Trees Strike Back

There was another reason Bosco got booted, and this brings me to Redwood Summer, whose campaign to save old growth forest this column last placed before you in July, with a description of the demonstration at Louisiana Pacific's pulp plant and log export dock at Samoa, just outside Eureka. The excellent event at Samoa was followed by an even better demonstration in Fort Bragg in late July. But in August, Redwood Summer trickled to an undistinguished conclusion with an ill-considered rally at Fortuna, not far from the Pacific Lumber mill in Scotia, plus a concert foolishly called Redwoodstock. The rally was put together by people from Berkeley, prominent in Seeds of Peace, and they made little effort to include local people.

September brought the gravediggers, in the form of Marc Cooper in *The Village Voice* for September 18 and Greg Goldin in the *L.A. Weekly* for September 7-13. Cooper and Goldin traveled together through the redwood empire and returned to offer the two largest alternative metropolitan weeklies in the country essentially the same report, though Cooper's was the more ignorant and snooty of the two.

His political take was basically that of Trip Gabriel's November 4 article in *The New York Times Magazine*. That is, Earth Firsters are mostly kooks whose wayward philosophy and irresponsible direct actions have, in Cooper's words, "squandered too much of the meager dividends of confidence that other environmentalists have slowly been building in the hostile communities that surround them." It seems in fact that some of the Earth Firsters, who are often at a slight angle to the universe anyway, were highly suspicious of Cooper and Goldin and opted for goofy put-ons lest the two be plants from the F.B.I.

Cooper's sentiments are couched in the political rhythms of the Democratic Leadership Council, quacking about weirdos bothering Joe Sixpack and setting back years of patient work by sober citizens in the Sierra Club and the Wilderness Society. His stuff about squandering the "meager dividends of confidence" is exactly what they used to say about the antiwar militants in the sixties. It's true that Redwood Summer sharply defined the issues. I know good environmental organizers in Humboldt County along the Mattole River who say that Earth Firsters made life more difficult, parachuting in on top of delicate local minuets and alliances. But at this point in the clearcutting game the potential of these alliances can be exaggerated.

For all their pious talk about polarization, Cooper and Goldin both missed the single most dramatic moment of the Redwood Summer rally at Fort Bragg on July 21, even though Goldin says he was there that day. There was a crowd of some 2,000 and, across town, a lumber industry rally slightly smaller in size. At the end, our crowd marched down the main street of Fort Bragg, separated from bellowing counterdemonstrators by platoons of sheriffs' deputies shipped in from as far afield as Alameda County.

At this tense point in the proceedings the Earth First! organizers did something in the way of antipolarization I'd not seen in a lifetime of such outings. From the truck-turned-sound-stage they asked if any of the people roaring abuse

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from the far side of the lines of cops would care to step up and make their views known. Two responded and came through the crowd. One young man called for a show of hands on how many in the crowd lived in Mendocino County, discovering to his surprise that a majority did.

Then a man called Duane Potter climbed up on the truck. His appearance caused visible consternation among the counterdemonstrators. Potter was known as a man who had done all the rough logging jobs in the woods. "Selective cutting is the reasonable way to go," he told the subdued loggers, describing how the pressures of pell-mell clearcutting, which had pushed him into booze and dope, finally drove him to quit, clean up and go into the recycling business.

It's the only rally I can remember when all the preaching wasn't at the converted and when, for a few minutes at least, the unconverted listened with attention. Yet neither Cooper nor Goldin reported this episode. When Stephen Talbot, who has a good account of Redwood Summer in the November/December issue of *Mother Jones*, wrote to the *Voice* to criticize Cooper's coverage, the best Cooper could manage apropos his scanting of Fort Bragg was that "many activists expressed concern that it polarized loggers and demonstrators." It's clear that Cooper knew nothing of Redwood Summer before he traveled north in August, and even then learned little.

Revolution From Above and Below

And what in truth was the political consequence of Redwood Summer? The Sierra Club, which had to be bullied into a belated criticism of the police charges against Bari and Cherney for somehow having planned their own attempted assassination (an event treated with spare sympathy for the victims by the alternative journalists Cooper and Goldin), spent the fall contrasting its own responsible efforts with the anarcho-hippies of Earth First!

This, by the way, is how they get you coming and going. Wearing his Democratic Leadership Council hat Cooper attacks Redwood Summer for its "anarchic character," saying the "author of Redwood Summer didn't have the influence to hold back an explicitly counterproductive action."

This "author" was Judi Bari, who spent most of the summer in agonizing pain, often near death, in the shadow of charges from the F.B.I. and the Oakland police, therefore in poor shape to exert much influence on anyone. But suppose she had the influence desired by Cooper. The *Voice* would have nailed her up for being a Stalinist.

The Sierra Club's big causes in California throughout the summer and fall were two ballot initiatives, Big Green and Forests Forever. Both were defeated on November 6, Big Green by a large enough margin to make me suspect it dragged down Forests Forever in its wake. Now, Big Green was a classic example of revolution from above as attempted by liberals of the sort inhabiting the Sierra Club and many of the other major environmental organizations. The proposition was a lawyer's wet dream, page after page of tiny type calling for vast changes in production, mostly agricultural, throughout the state. The whole package was dumped on voters already apprehensive about recession, wary about costs and job loss if the proposition passed.

The political mobilization behind Big Green was pitiful, precisely because outfits like the Sierra Club don't mobilize politically, figuring they can do the job with lobbyists and lawyers. Unlike Earth First!, which in the north country made a conscious political decision to address workers' concerns (an effort greeted with tremendous sneers by Cooper), Big Green revealed the contemptuousness of professional environmentalists who think they can ask people to vote for tax increases and job losses without offering anything in return toward meeting people's legitimate interests. For all the mainstreamers' diatribes about Earth First!'s "eco-terrorist" tactics, it's they who seem not to have given a thought to confronting the economic violence their measures could inflict on people.

So Big Green was rejected, as was every other environmental initiative in the state except for a ban on gill netting, perhaps because the fishing fleets couldn't tie the tuna lobby to Tom Hayden, starkist though he has been in his time.

Revolution from above failed. Meanwhile, the zone where Earth First! had pushed forward with Redwood Summer saw the defeat of the lumber companies' main man in Congress in this area, Doug Bosco, who toppled just like the old growth that he'd helped to doom and Redwood Summer couldn't save. Thirty thousand people, no doubt some workers who heard Bosco savage the Earth Firsters that day in Fort Bragg, pulled the lever for the Peace and Freedom Party precisely because, like Earth First!, it said No compromise, no last-minute lurch to the evil that is lesser, though never less enough. So Redwood Summer, trashed by the *Voice*, the *L.A. Weekly* and the *Times*, had the last laugh, seeing the biggest vote in the country for a third-party candidate in a three-way race.

Lyndon and Jim in Cell Storm

Some questioned my citing of a story (from the *Anderson Valley Advertiser* in fact) by Fred Gardner disclosing that Lyndon LaRouche and preacher Jim Bakker were sharing a cell in the federal pen in Rochester, Minnesota. Michael Blowen, who has a gossip column in *The Boston Globe*, excitedly announced that the story didn't hold up. Why, said Blowen, he'd phoned the prison and got an official who'd been kind enough to tell him that most definitely at that time LaRouche and Bakker were not in the same cell, which is exactly what you'd expect a prison official to answer when the press calls and alarm bells go off in his head.

A few weeks later LaRouche told a newspaper in South Carolina that yes, he had been a cellmate of Bakker for a while but was glad it was over as Bakker had a "big retinue of admirers who would constantly come around." A.P. put the news on its wire and I called up Blowen and told him to eat crow. He got a few feathers in his mouth but then lost his nerve, suggesting to his reader that maybe he should go on believing the prison spokesman rather than LaRouche. Fred's informant, a con in the prison, reports that Bakker just can't stop scamming in the name of the Lord. He's racking up big profits selling ceramics he makes in the prison workshop.

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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

Napoleon Complex

JOHN LEONARD

THE GENERAL IN HIS LABYRINTH. *By Gabriel García Márquez. Translated by Edith Grossman. Knopf. 285 pp. $19.95.*

Bolívar, the father of many nations and a child of the Enlightenment, once complained: "The South Americans have blundered through the centuries as the blind blunder among colors."

García Márquez begets colors like a Picasso. Among other things, he has seen

> The diamonds embedded in the teeth of black grandmothers who sold heads of Indians and ginger roots sitting on their safe buttocks under the drenching rain . . . the solid gold cows on Tanaguarena beach . . . the blind visionary of La Guayra who charged two reals to scare off the blandishments of death with a one-string violin . . . Trinidad's burning August . . . the green Hindus who shat in the middle of the street in front of their shops with genuine silkworm shirts and mandarins carved from the whole tusk of an elephant. . . . Haiti's nightmare, its blue dogs, the oxcart that collected the dead off the streets at dawn.

Besides these black grandmothers, gold cows, blue dogs and green Hindus, he's no slouch, either, when it comes to ice, mirrors, magnets and windmills.

Between them, Simón Bolívar and Gabriel García Márquez invented Latin America. That one of these continental dreamers should novelize the other isn't a surprise. What does surprise is that García Márquez has chosen to novelize the *end* of Bolívar's life—the last wasting days and insomniac nights on the river Magdalena, when the Liberator was himself almost blind and had to be read aloud to—omitting the beginning and the middle, when the colors burned the brightest.

There are some things we ought to know about Bolívar that Gabo isn't telling us. Permit me to educate myself in public.

I. "Democracy on his lips; aristocracy in his heart."

So many Bolívars, so many novels: the wild colonial boy, raised on Plutarch and Rousseau; Freemason, Jacobin, warrior-prince; Man of Reason on a white horse; constitutionalist, emperor and stud; Lear on the Dover heath; Oedipus at Colonus.

He was born rich, into the Creole aristocracy of Caracas, in 1783, with sugar mills and slaves. He was educated as if he were Emile, by a tutor who had translated Chateaubriand's *Atala* into Spanish. He came to young manhood in Madrid, where he married a nobleman's daughter, and in Paris, where he read Voltaire, Montesquieu, Helvétius, D'Alembert, Buffon, Hobbes, even Spinoza. From Madrid, Paris, Rome and Vesuvius, he brought back to South America liberal thought, revolutionary passion, Romantic afflatus—Goethe! Beethoven! Wordsworth! Camille!—and some Bonaparte. Decades later, on the Liberator's bedside table, there was the very same copy of Rousseau's *The Social Contract*, edited by Diderot, that Napoleon himself had thumbed through on St. Helena.

Bolívar is naked to history, a target for every determinism going, and Gabo's unwilling to help him.

García Márquez is no more interested in Viennese scrimshaw than Nabokov was, but contemplate this psychogram: Bolívar lost his father at age 2; his mother at age 8; his wife, to yellow fever, at age 19. There would be many women but only one great love the rest of his life, and he died without legitimate heirs, unless you count Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador and Bolivia. Revolutionary politics as displaced Oedipal rage? He also had a drop or two of "Negro blood," which he didn't like to talk about, though every time he invented a country, he also freed its slaves. It's just that he'd rather they wouldn't vote. Bad faith?

Anyway, by 1807, back in Venezuela, Bolívar was pretending to read Tacitus and plotting against Spain. (There's the messy business of Francisco de Miranda, a hobnob of Gibbon, an intimate of Madame de Staël, and maybe a lover of Catherine the Great, who led the first disastrous insurrection, and seems to have been turned over to the enemy by the Creole aristocrats; but Bolívar's biographers are mealy-mouthed on this subject, Gabo's silent, and I'll take a pass.) In 1811 he freed his own sugar mill slaves. By 1812 he was on the road—into history and the primeval—with Homer in his backpack, wading waist-deep through Amazons and crocodiles; over the snow-cones of the Andes, swooping down like a condor. There were the usual atrocities on both sides, but place-names like Puerto Cabello, Cartagena, Orinoco and Carabobo are as resonant to South Americans as Shiloh, Gettysburg and Appomattox are to us. And Bolívar, like William of Orange, while often defeated was ever indomitable. Retreating as far away as Haiti, he would regroup and set sail, like Drake or Morgan or Fidel Castro or Don Quixote, in the general direction of Venezuela, with six schooners, a sloop and a printing press. Rousseau would have loved it.

Along the way, he picked up Manuela Saenz, a perfect mixture of Amazon and courtesan. She could throw a spear, shoot a gun, smoke a cigar and ride a horse, all at the same time. "Her love for animals," one biographer primly notes, "caused her to be accused of some amazing depravities." Once, she saved Bolívar from assassination. On another occasion, left behind in Lima, she invaded army headquarters, dressed as a man, brandishing a pistol, to insist that the troops rally to his side. She seems to me the sort of tough cookie, almost prototypical, that Gabo could make much of—but he doesn't. She was arrested after the death of her man but escaped by boat, with a lock of his hair and a glove, to wind up in the sordid port of Paita, where Garibaldi found her in 1843. Yes, Garibaldi, in a blood-red Montevideo slaughterhouse smock, with a ship called the Mazzini, flying a black flag with a volcano symbol.

It's all too novelistic. Back in the Old World, Carlyle called Bolívar a Ulysses waiting for his Homer, and Byron borrowed his name for the yacht he used to bring back Shelley's body. It was as if Europe, from whose wishful thinking, from whose mythomania, this American hero derived in the first place, needed him back as a metaphor or a booster shot. To the Ecuadorean poet Olmedo, who wrote overly heroic odes about the battle of

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Junín, Bolívar joked: "If I were not so honest and you were not a poet, I could believe you wished to write a parody of the *Iliad* using the heroes of our miserable farce as characters." But poets, of course, decide who's heroic and who's farcical.

Now look at "Simón the First" in the twilight of his empire-building, as constitutions fall like playing cards and the revolution eats its children: the President of two new countries and the curse of several more, believing always in "one nation, free and unified, from Mexico to Cape Horn," but despairing as often of the anarchy that took over the minute he left the palace; admitting to himself that he was not at all a Talleyrand, with the patience to transform the leaves of the mulberry plant into silk: "I am not capable of playing on such a complicated keyboard. I would break it."

He was thin-skinned, at the mercy of "the suspicions of any fifth-rate writer in a provincial newspaper." And self-pitying: "Slander strangles me as the serpents strangled Laocoön." He also protested too much, especially when he suspected he wouldn't get his way: "As far as I am concerned, you may rest assured that I shall not accept the presidency: first, because I am tired of giving orders; second, because I am tired of being accused of ambition. . . . " And he blamed everybody else: "He who dedicates his services to a revolution, plows the sea."

He wanted freedom but also order. And while his notion of order wasn't as barmy as Miranda's, who wanted a hereditary emperor called "Inca," he hadn't the silkworm patience to let these new little nation-states sort out their own borders and squabbles. His idea of a federal union, a kind of "democratic Caesarism" with someone a lot like Bolívar (or Napoleon) in charge, kept him hopping from Caracas to Lima to Quito to Bogotá and back again, putting down minor rebellions led by suddenly "disloyal" aides-de-camp. He had two ways of dealing with the ingratitude of men and nations. Men he got rid of, when he could. Nations he'd encourage to write a constitution that fit him like a glove, which he turned into a fist. The two are related, and this is where the interest of a novelist like Gabo, a Man of the Left, ought to be quickened.

A typical Bolívar constitution called for a President—elected for life—and a two-chambered law-making body, with wealthy upper-class Creole families as a

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substitute for European nobility in one house and a lower house to be elected by voters with a minimum of property. For Bolivia he upped the ante. His best biographer in English, Gerhard Masur, describes his Bolivian scheme as "an elective kingship such as the Catholic church and the Holy Roman Empire." The President-for-Life was the sun in the planetary system of tribunes, senators and "censors" (guardians of morals, also elected for life), with a hereditary prime minister, usually a buddy of his, like Sucre. Left out, you'll have noticed, are the "beggar-proletariat," the recently emancipated but sadly "ignorant" Negroes, and all those "superstitious" Indians who'd been around for three thousand years. Some social contract.

I'll mention only one of the men he got rid of, because he's the one the novelist finds compelling. Without General Manuel Piar, ambitious, theatrical, but also a brilliant tactician, Bolívar would have lost the Orinoco. But Piar made difficulties about the aristocracy in Caracas after the fall of Angostura; and there were rumors of yet another insurrection; and if it was acceptable to let some intriguers off the hook—well, Piar was a better soldier and therefore potentially more dangerous. Surprising even his closest confidants, Bolívar had Piar shot. Eleven years later, he was still justifying himself: "The death of General Piar was a political necessity which saved the country. The rebels were disturbed and frightened by him. . . . Never was there a death more useful and more politic and at the same time more deserved." Among Bolívar's biographers there's a queasiness about Piar, apologetic handstands, because Creole troublemakers like Bermúdez and Mariño were spared. But Piar was a mulatto. He might not even have been qualified to *vote* in, say, Bolivia. It occurs to the novelist that the mulatto general might have been someone Bolívar felt guilty about when he went down the Magdalena to his death, in 1830, at age 47.

Of his fellow men-at-revolutionary-arms, San Martín, of Argentina, went into a very long Old World exile; José Gervasio Artigas, creator of the Republic of Uruguay, spent his last thirty years as a farmer in Paraguay; Bernardo O'Higgins, the father of Chile, retired to Peru, and died in Lima with nobody's noticing; Sucre, of Bolivia, was murdered; likewise shot, in Mexico, were Hidalgo and Morelos, and, in Costa Rica, Morazán. At Bolívar's deathbed near Santa Marta, on a plantation owned by a Spaniard—oh, Magic Realism!—the attending physicians were Dr. Reverend and Dr. Night.

II. Gabo

Born to colorize: a mestizo, whose father was illegitimate. First-hand experience in childhood Aracataca of ice in boxes of frozen fish at the United Fruit Company store; *La Violencia*; Montessori and a scholarship to a high school for the gifted; law student at the National University in Bogotá, closed down on account of assassination; newspaper columnist from the age of 20; salesman of encyclopedias and Colombia's first-ever movie critic; off to Geneva, Rome and Paris; arrested as an "Arab" during the Algerian troubles; *In Evil Hour* and *No One Writes to the Colonel*; Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union; by Greyhound through Faulkner's American South; in Mexico City, to write ad copy for J. Walter Thompson and movie scripts with Carlos Fuentes; writer's block from 1961 to 1964; thunderstruck in his Opel on the highway en route to Acapulco by visitations of the Buendias; back then to "the Cave of the Mafia" to write eight hours a day for eighteen months, and an end to Solitude. The rest is Nobel stuff. If you want more, look at Gene H. Bell-Villada's *García Márquez* (University of North Carolina Press), an agreeable mix of man and metaphor, with nifty readings and inside info. Did you know that the six chapters of *The Autumn of the Patriarch* not only mimic Bartók's six string quartets but are also closely patterned on Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*? "The great Virginia," Gabo said.

Which brings up the whole business of literary influence. *Solitude* is taught in many courses in Third World Studies programs as a masterwork on colonial rape, and it is. Those who teach it this way, though, tend to resent its being taught any other way—co-opted by Comp Lit Eurocentrics for whom Gabo is a clever child of Faulkner, Kafka, Rabelais and Joyce, the Bible and Sophocles. To talk about a *Patriarch* indebted to Bartók and Virginia Woolf, or a *Cholera* owing something to Proust, Flaubert and Simone de Beauvoir's *The Coming of Age*, is to drive these people crazy.

Well, tough. Gabo grew up on *The Three Musketeers* and *The Magic Mountain*. He read Kafka and Woolf, in translations by Borges. *The Metamorphosis* blew him away. *Leaf Storm* wouldn't be the book it is, if not for *As I Lay Dying*;

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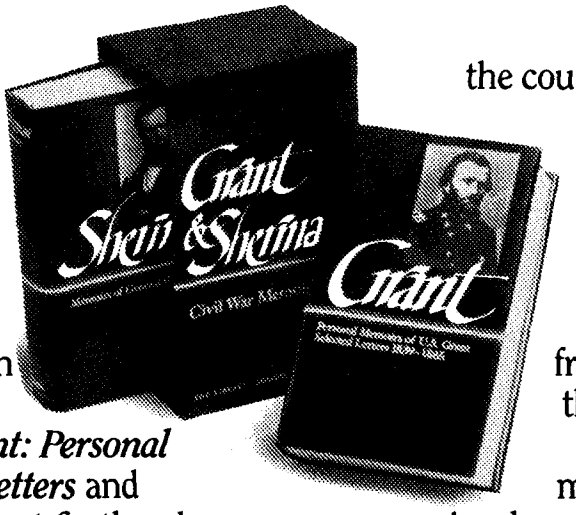
"If you can whip Lee and I can march to the Atlantic, I think Uncle Abe will give us a twenty days' leave of absence to see the young folks."

—General William T. Sherman to General Ulysses S. Grant
September 20, 1864



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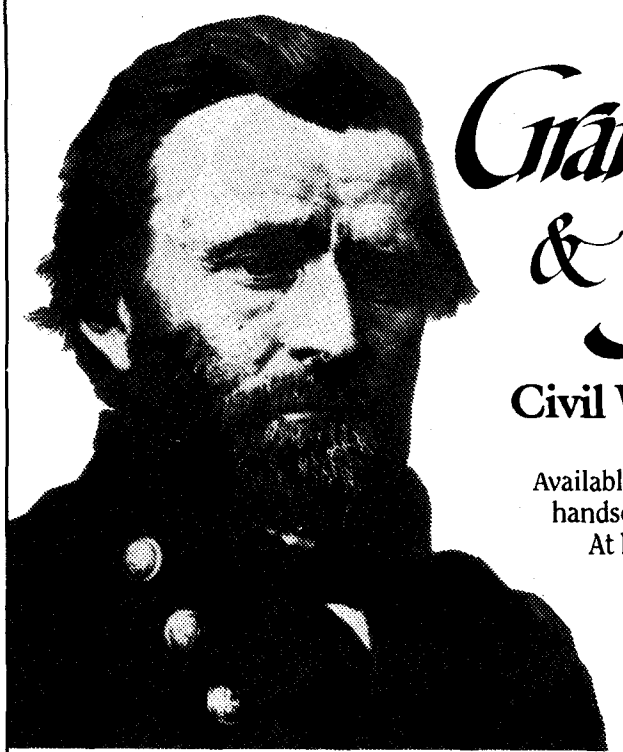

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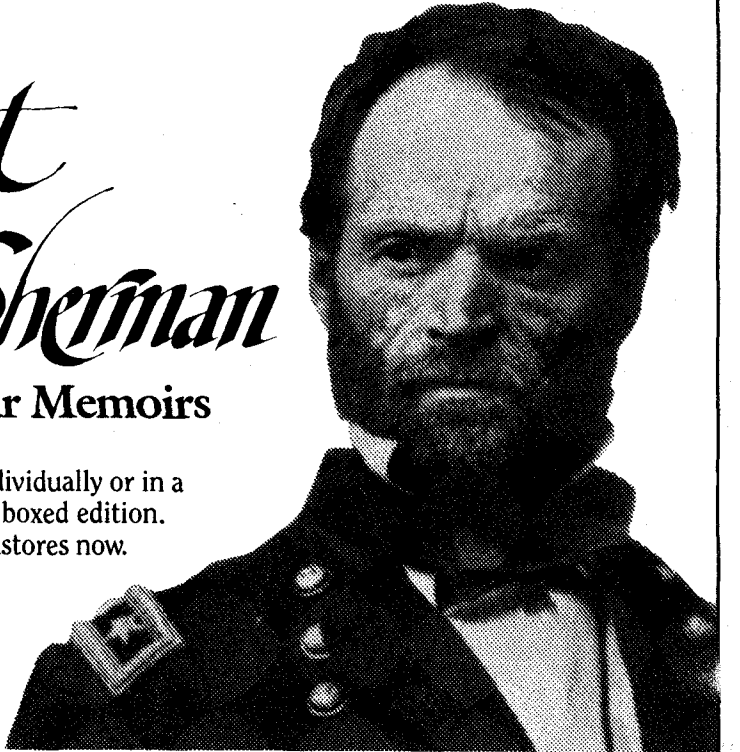

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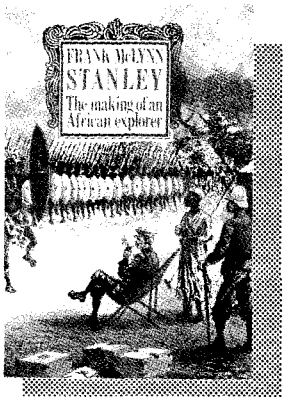

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nor *Solitude*, if not for *Absalom, Absalom!* (and Defoe). Nor, to reverse the coin, would *Solitude*—folk myth, fairy tale, medieval/colonial romance, gothic novel, chronicle of exploration, sci-fi—look the same without Afro-Hispanic musical forms like the mambo and the bolero, or Caribbean folklore, or all of Spanish literature, including *Sor Juana*. *Patriarch* is unimaginable without Suetonius, Plutarch *and* Rubén Darío *and* Domingo Sarmiento.

But no matter how hot the influence or heavy the inspirations, Gabo alone had to master in his eighteen months of *Solitude* the dozens of arcane texts on navigation, alchemy, poisons, Sanskrit. And that's the easy part. Then you need magic or genius: a plague of insomnia and amnesia; ghosts, priests, Indians, Arabs, gypsies; men with machetes hacking their way through "bloody lilacs and golden salamanders" to find a Spanish galleon in a swamp; a stream of blood, an umbilical thread, that feels its path across a city from a dying son to a grieving mother; a paterfamilias chained to a tree in the garden muttering in Latin of memory and desire; a rain of so many tiny yellow flowers that they "covered the roofs and blocked the doors and smothered the animals who slept outside." Thus enthralled, a reader's ready to believe anything: certainly that Macondo was Eden before the Fall, South America before the Conquest and Colombia during the armed occupation of the United Fruit Company. Gabo may have meant his plague of insomnia to symbolize the Indian loss of bodily peace and spiritual history, but for many of us it also signifies our dreadful century, and what we've done to corrupt so many languages. We are allowed: Readers have rights.

The fact is, Gabo's sui generis. Nobody else in his own Third World has written a novel as wonderfully encompassing as *Solitude*, and neither has anyone else in the First or Second Worlds, not since World War II, and maybe not since Joyce or Proust. Besides, great writers always fatten up on everything that's gone before them, after which we'll feed, in turn, on them. I'd like to see a Comp Lit course on how Gabo himself has influenced literature since *Solitude*. Salman Rushdie, for example, whose *Midnight's Children* tips its turban. Or Toni Morrison, who says she hadn't read *Solitude* before she wrote *Song of Solomon*, but really . . . A few years ago in Japan, I had dinner with Kobo Abe, who had decided never to write another word because *Solitude* had been translated into Japanese, and Kobo Abe and Gabo were exactly the same age, and the author of *Woman in the Dunes* was positive he'd never write a book as good as *Solitude*, so he'd given up. The next day on the bullet train to Kyoto I heard that Gabo had won the Nobel Prize for Literature. *You* know what Japanese writers do when they're depressed. They take gas, like Kawabata, or fall on swords, like Mishima. Patched in a panic through Tokyo to Hakone, I got Kobo Abe's wife on the phone. She said he was fine, and happily at work! How could this be? "García Márquez," she explained, "has joined the company of the immortals. Abe's no longer in competition with him."

This is un-American, but it describes the world literature in which we're all complicitous, what Maxine Hong Kingston calls a Global Novel and Rushdie celebrates as "hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs." It never stops, nor should it. I reviewed Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* in these pages and it just occurred to me that I missed two crucial influences, neither of them Eastern—Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* and Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*.

For that matter, Octavio Paz became more interesting after India.

Before *Solitude*, in fact, there was in Gabo's shorter fiction an *excess* of Faulkner and the French; of De Sica and the gloomy neorealists; of coffins, tumors, incest, doppelgängers, scissors in the eye, existential futz. Except for the sex in "The Sea of Lost Time"—"First they did it like earthworms, then like rabbits, and finally like turtles"—you couldn't buy a laugh. And the famous magic had yet to grow up, from the chameleons in *In Evil Hour* that couldn't change color because they were blind, to the Greek sailors in "Innocent Eréndira" who paid women for their favors with "living sponges, that later on walked about the house moaning like patients in a hospital and making the children cry so that they could drink the tears."

Seven long years after *Solitude*, with time out for Gabo to be far too soft on Fidel Castro's bashing of dissidents and gays, came *The Autumn of the Patriarch* (1976), to which *The General in His Labyrinth* aspires to be a counterweight. A matched pair, these two novels imagine power. I will get to *Patriarch* when I get

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to *Labyrinth*, in a minute. Between *Patriarch* and *Love in the Time of Cholera*, we got the strictly journalistic *The Story of a Shipwrecked Sailor* (1986), the backwards murder mystery and send-up of romance novellas, *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* (1982), and the odd little book he wrote for somebody else, *Clandestine in Chile* (1987), the story of Miguel Littín.

Littín was one of Chile's best-known moviemakers till forced into exile when his friend Allende was murdered in 1973. Gabo met him in Madrid in 1986. Littín had just come back from an undercover visit to Chile—fake beard, fake glasses, fake passport and fake (Uruguayan) accent—with home movies of Pinochet's dictatorship. It's easy to see why Gabo was intrigued. The man spied on his own country, like writers everywhere. He forged a new identity, counterfeited another self, and then had problems feeling authentic, two great modernist themes. And he'd turned politics into a movie; very Latin American. Inside Littín's skin, an itchy Gabo looks for and finds his usual quota of portents: a dream palace at the foot of a French garden; babies in their prams dressed up like rabbits; a restaurant where tired seagulls go to sleep. Gabo also bullies Littín into thinking about two of the writer's personal heroes: the martyred Allende, a doctor who learned his politics and chess at the cobble of an anarchist shoemaker; and the poet of love and revolution, Pablo Neruda, who spent *his* Nobel Prize money removing the stable of a castle from Normandy to his own backyard, for the church-like vaults, the stained-glass windows and the pond full of lotus flowers.

It makes you wonder, doesn't it? Is Latin America just full of this stuff, waiting around for a Gabo to see it, to turn blood into butterflies? Or has Gabo, the man with kaleidoscope eyes, invented his own Latin America? Or has Latin America invented Gabo, out of all its technicolored ambiguities?

Love in the Time of Cholera is a happier story, though not quite the three-hanky job (a kind of Hispanic *Cocoon*) so many reviewers gushed about. Gabo abandons his magic act to tell a tale, almost straight, covering several generations, in two different centuries, in three separate minds. In the last half of the nineteenth century, in an old port city on the Caribbean coast, under the golden domes of the viceroys, a young Florentino and an even younger Fermina fall in love. They are both from the wrong side

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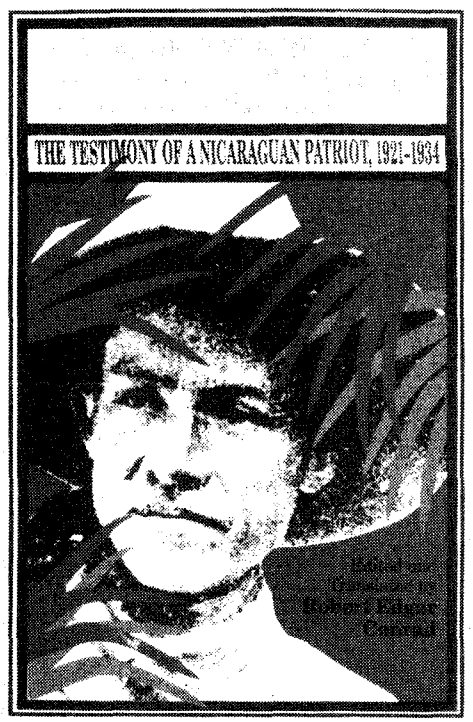

Edited and translated with additional selections by
Robert Edgar Conrad

For the first time in English, here are the impassioned words of the Nicaraguan hero and martyr Augusto C. Sandino, for whom the recent revolutionary regime was named. From 1927 until 1933 American Marines fought a bitter jungle war in Nicaragua, with Sandino as their guerrilla foe. This artisan and farmer turned soldier was an unexpectedly formidable military threat to the U.S.-backed ruling regime. He was also the creator of a deeply patriotic language of protest. The documents here constitute a spontaneous autobiography, a record not only of Sandino's life but also of a crucial and often overlooked aspect of the relationship between Nicaragua and the United States.

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of the social tracks. He's illegitimate; her father is a crook. Fermina dreams over Florentino's letters. He composes a waltz for her on the violin. She says she'll marry him if he promises he won't make her eat eggplant. She will marry, instead, the most eligible bachelor in Rionegro, the haut bourgeois Dr. Urbino, famous for having rid the country of cholera. The doctor won't die until he's 81, from a broken spine, after falling out of a mango tree in pursuit of a parrot. And then Florentino, with his "mineral patience," his "Trappist severity" and his "chronic romanticism," the worldly boss of all the riverboats and a secret poet, too, reaffirms his love of the widow Fermina, fifty years, nine months and four days after she kissed him off.

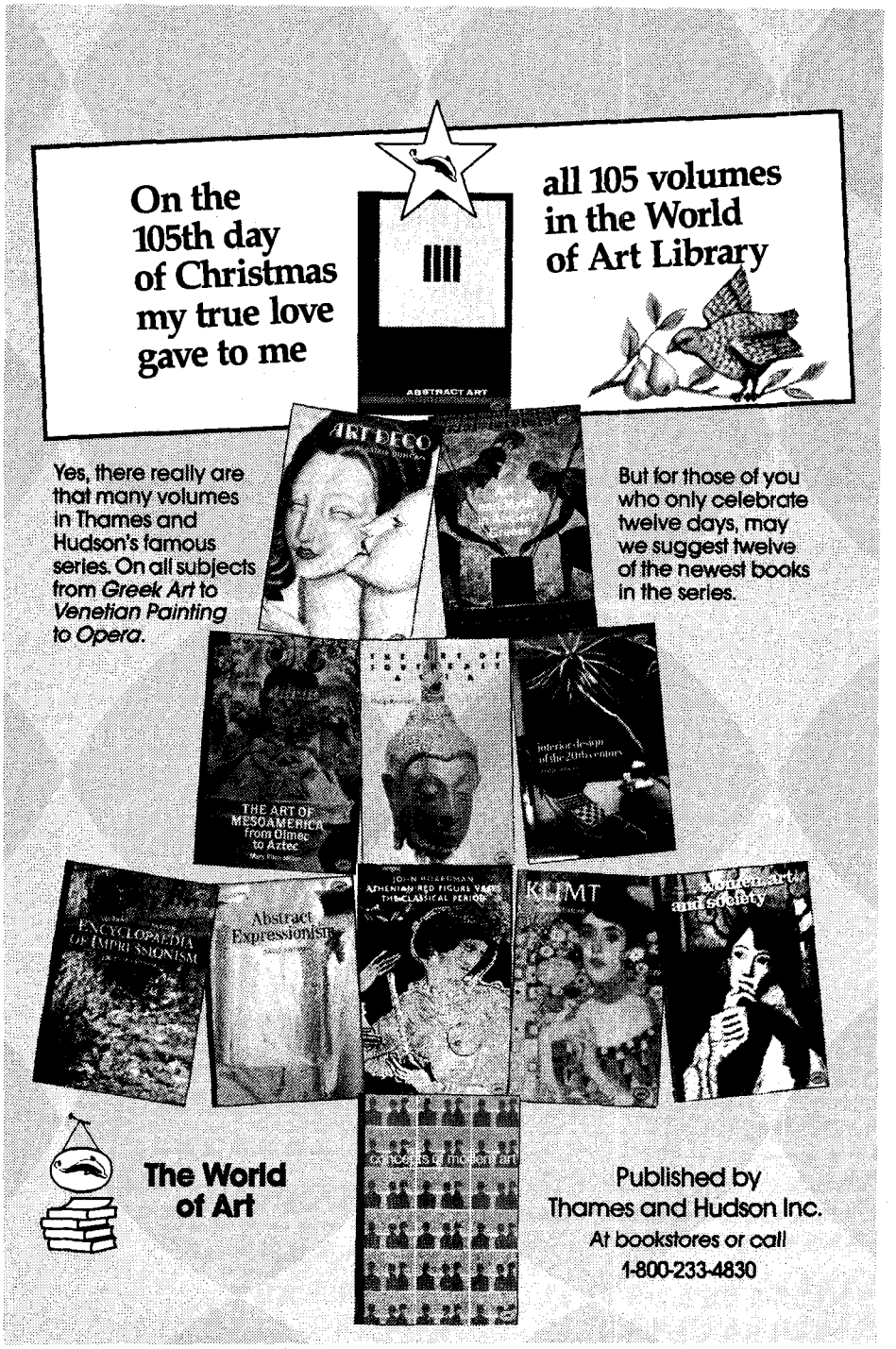
Well, yes, it's a sumptuous portrait of turn-of-the-century self-deception, a knowing account of marriage as a social compromise, a book of wonders about neediness in old age as consuming as the last poems of Yeats, and a laudation of love that would abolish time. And I'm not saying that the cholera isn't real; nor the geronto-erotics a mask for some other, ulterior, Marxist meaning; nor that Gabo didn't want to make us feel good. But I do suggest there are a couple more choleras that Dr. Urbino didn't get rid of. There are those fevers and obsessions, like love and poetry and music, immune to the science and subversive of the death-spirit of an indecent social order. There's the cholera of political violence: Up in her hot-air balloon, looking down at corpses strewn on the landscape, what Fermina sees, besides white drool foaming at the lips of the dead, are bullet-holes at the backs of their necks: *La Violencia.* And Dr. Urbino, a specialist in "the ethical management of forgetfulness," is, of course, a Good Liberal, inadequate to history's rages, the mad passions of illicit love, the daunting silence of the river idol "with her serpent's eyes." Even the port city, consecrated to a Holy Spirit cult, has its own unconscious, a nightmare past: It was the principal slave market of the New World. In its marble ruins the viceroys rot with plague inside their armor. *That* plague's symbolic, too.

But Gabo's got us this far on the river, under many colors, including a black flag.

III. Pick a Patriarch

Not exactly at Bell-Villada's suggestion, I reread *The Autumn of the Patriarch* while listening to Bartók. It's still a masterpiece, and no less difficult. From the beginning, in the decrepit light and ancient silence, with cows in the bedroom, lepers under the rosebushes and the body "floating face down on the lunar waters of his dreams," to the end, when this "comic tyrant," a "figment of the imagination," flies through "the dark sound of the last frozen leaves of his autumn toward the homeland of shadows," it's a novel that stares us down, like a Toltec stele or a Quetzalcoatl, as if the Patriarch himself looked back at us "from the slime of his lugubrious Asiatic silences."

Patriarch is a slow, dense, downward book. To be sure, we meet some interesting people: Leticia Nazareno—an Imelda *and* an Evita—who'll be eaten by dogs. Saturno Santos, "who knew Indian secrets of how to change his form at will . . . turn into an armadillo or a pond." The papal nuncio who refuses to beatify the Patriarch's mother, that wandering birdwoman who "conceived him standing up and with her hat on because of the storm of bluebottle flies around the wineskins of fermented molasses." The deposed dictators playing dominoes in the rest home on a cliff, "poor presidents of nowhere grazing on oblivion in the house on the reefs and begging a hello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from ships." We're also asked to contemplate the miraculous and the horrific: "disappeared" children, hurricanes and cannibalism, a fixed lottery, the stolen sea. And there are Gabo's usual magic tricks—a prestidigitation of pelicans, iguana eggs, telepathy, the mules in the mountains with grand pianos on their backs, sewing machines and severed heads . . .

But the magic is black; the colors rot. *Patriarch*'s heavy, like the man's very feet. Those always dragging feet are a terrific conceit: "dragging his graveyard feet along the corridors of ashes and scraps of carpets and singed tapestries"; "thick feet of a captive monarch past the darkened mirrors with the single spur wrapped in velvet so that nobody could follow his trail of gold shavings . . . " Etc.

In an "ancient city of viceroys and buccaneers," the Patriarch's a cunning thug, nothing more. Having enjoyed "the solitary vice of power" for so many years, all he knows is that "a lie is more comfortable than doubt, more useful than love, more lasting than truth." From other Latin tinpots we have known and loathed, Bolívar's bastard whelps like Gómez and Somoza and Guzmán Blanco, Gabo's borrowed this or that character defect: Trujillo, for instance, had a thing for cows; and Perón, a taste for schoolgirls. And from the biographies of their prototypes, the Roman emperors, he steals what he needs for a glaze of the mythic: how Claudius and Domitian dealt with dissidents; the uniform worn by the child Caligula; Nero's kinky passion for his mother, Agrippina; the number of wounds suffered by Caesar. (For more of this, see Bell-Villada, who's also instructive on the linguistic wonders of Gabo's original Spanish.) But why this drag, a gathering mass? I think it's because of the stolen sea.

He let them steal it because there was nothing else left to sell. The quinine and tobacco monopolies had gone to the English, rubber and cocoa to the Dutch, concessions for railroads and river navigation to the Germans, "the last train on the upland barrens had fallen down an orchid-covered precipice, leopards were sleeping on the velvet seats, the carcasses of the paddlewheelers were sunk in the swamps of the rice paddies, the news was rotting in the mailbags . . . " And so, one April, North American nautical engineers took away the Caribbean, "carried it off in numbered pieces to plant it far from the hurricanes in the blood-red dawns of Arizona."

They took it away with everything it had inside general sir, with the reflection of our cities, our timid drowned people, our demented dragons . . .

What's been stolen is memory; what remains is a weight of horror: long silence, drowned bodies. Like some pre-Columbian artifact, a volcanic storm god or altar toad, the Patriarch is somehow *forever*, a barbaric abiding. Worship of him is indistinguishable from fear of him, a numb surrender. As superstitious as he is, in thrall to sibyls who see death in basin-water, to angels with machetes, so are his subjects, spellbound by the madness of the arbitrary and all-powerful. We know this because what began in Gabo's head as an interior monologue became, triumphantly, a kind of choral mass. Dozens, maybe hundreds of voices—retainers, victims, ambassadors, peasants, nuns, ghosts—tell us the Patriarch's story in a people's polyphony, a cleansing flood.

This Patriarch is a child of Bolívar's, from a long line that began five years after the Liberator's death, with Rosas, and has since afflicted us with the likes of Jiménez, Batista, Duvalier. Jacobo Timerman is inclined to believe that Cas-

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tro's not much better, and I'm inclined to agree with him, despite the fact that Castro's got Gabo to give him books at night as he roams the streets of Havana in his chauffeur-driven limousine . . . like Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. "¡Que cabrón!" said Castro to Gabo after *Dracula*: "The bastard! I couldn't sleep!" Nor should any of them sleep, our pols, our caudillos. They ought to be looking into books as if they were mirrors, and seeing Dracula, Hamlet, Ahab, Frankenstein, Robin Hood, Raskolnikov, Pinocchio, Oedipus and Peter Pan.

Like the Patriarch, I've dragged my feet. It's not that I expected more Macondo magic or another installment of the riverboat lovebirds in their frisky dotage. Death and politics are fine by me. But from *Labyrinth*—along with clues as to what went wrong, along with a demystifying of the hero-cult—I did expect some reimagining of Bolívar's "almost maniacal dream of continental unity": instead of the Patriarch's barbaric mysticism, the true colors of a Latin American Enlightenment. Why isn't Bolívar allowed to remember Miranda, or the summit meeting with San Martín at Guayaquil, or the Congress of Panama? I don't understand the choices. It's as if Gabo had cut himself down to the size of the old man on the river, as if an unbecoming modesty or piety inhibited him, after so much homework and second thoughts. Just because the Liberator didn't believe in magic doesn't mean the novelist has to go cold-turkey.

Not that there aren't earthquakes and volcanos; rockets and bagpipes; cockatoos and clavichords; alligators with their jaws open to catch butterflies, bears that thread needles, mules that eat bedrooms and "nine cages of parrots and macaws that railed against Santander in three languages." But they're almost perfunctory. For the most part, at the end of his tether, chewing on his string, Bolívar's picked at with a finicky minimalism, lacking Lear's stricken grandeur, or the insight of blind Oedipus.

It's the Bolívar familiar from biographies—rational, generous, insomniac; a lover of women, horses and dogs; a hater of firearms, tobacco smoke and bullfights; at his best putting down European know-it-alls with a recital of the "hideous slaughters" in their own history: "Don't try to have us do well in twenty years what you have done so badly in two thousand. . . . Damn it, please let us have our Middle Ages in peace!" And he is, decisively, mestizo: "He had a strain of African blood through a paternal great-great-grandfather, who had fathered a son by a slavewoman, and it was so evident in his features that the aristocrats in Lima called him Sambo. But as his glory increased, the painters began to idealize him, washing his blood, mythologizing him, until they established him in official memory with the Roman profile of his statues."

Yet he's also diminished. The guilds are against him, and the students, and mobs drunk on corn liquor. There are insults painted on the convent walls. Black widows of his many wars line the riverbank. His hussars sow the "fiery seed" of gonorrhea. His hosts at fancy meals, fearful of his tuberculosis, can hardly wait for him to leave before burying their Bohemian crystal and English china. His favorite, Sucre, has been murdered in ambush, "as he walked alone, his hands in his pockets, through the atrium of the ca-

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thedral. . . . On the night he learned of Sucre's death the General vomited blood." For his consumption, his constipation, and his "crisis of coughing," the doctors administer enemas. So does the novelist. We are meant to believe that on Bolívar's "return trip to the void," history is what consumes him, and memory purges.

But this isn't, at the harmonium or the synthesizer, memory as forgotten music, dark chords, muffled cries, children's night-shrieks. It is memory as laundry-list: "twenty years of fruitless wars and the disillusionments of power"; lost in the Orinoco jungle, ordering his soldiers to eat the horses so they wouldn't eat each other; the stoning to death of a dog in a slave quarter; the circling of the turkey buzzards over a slaughterhouse; the ill-fated Constitution of Bolivia, the imperial investiture accepted in Peru, the lifelong presidency and Senate membership dreamed of in Colombia, the absolute powers assumed after the Ocana Convention. What had it all come to? "I have no friends." "Nobody understands anything." "Now we are the widows. We are the orphans, the wounded, the pariahs of independence."

Even Piar, the mulatto general who had "called on blacks, mulattoes, zambos, and all the destitute of the country to resist the white aristocracy of Caracas, personified by the General," is remembered more as a position paper than a human being, much less a crisis of conscience, just when the novel ought to be picking up steam:

> Piar's official advocate did not have to lie when he praised him as one of the outstanding heroes in the struggle against the power of Spain. He was declared guilty of desertion, insurrection, and treason, and was condemned to death and the loss of his military titles. Knowing his merits, no one believed that the sentence would be confirmed by the General. . . . He revoked the sentence of demotion and confirmed the sentence of death by firing squad, which he made even worse by ordering a public execution. . . . the sentence was carried out under the brutal sun in the main square of Angostura, the city that Piar himself had wrested from the Spanish six months before. The commander of the firing squad had ordered the removal of the remains of a dead dog that turkey buzzards were devouring, and he had the gates closed to keep stray animals from disrupting the dignity of the execution. He denied Piar the final honor of giving the order to fire and blindfolded him against his will, but he could not prevent him from bidding farewell to the world with a kiss to the crucifix and a salute to the flag.

I quote at such length because this passage typifies what's disappointing about the novel. Thirteen years after the execution of Piar, Bolívar says to his servant, "I would do it again." His servant is pleased. I'm not. Of course, by this time Bolívar has decided for himself that his real enemies are the oligarchies in each new nation who oppose his dream of unity "because it was unfavorable to the local privileges of the great families." If he ought then to be a bit more sympathetic to what Piar tried to tell him, it isn't Gabo's fault that Simón was a poor listener and a slow learner. And didn't it *ever* occur to Bolívar that maybe these brand-new principalities, having thrown off one King, were chary of sticking their necks on the block of another?

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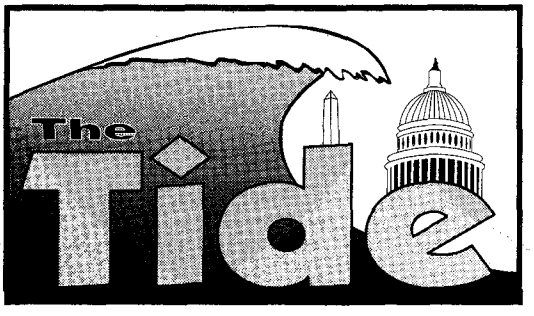

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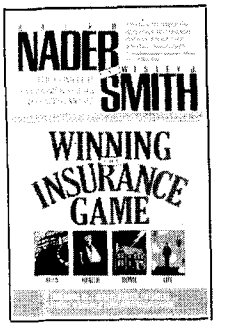

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stead of art, so matter-of-fact as to be affectless. The Creole with a mestizo in his closet meets the mulatto with an attitude problem, and one of them isn't listening, and there isn't room for both in the same New World. Isn't Piar's death the Passion Play of aborted revolution, a betrayal of the Enlightenment, a paradigm of dissent silenced, of privilege legitimized, by firing squad? Bolívar tears out the tongue of a spokesman for those mute and colorblind masses—a historical unconscious—for whom Gabo himself has always testified: thereby dooming them to centuries of patriarchs. Shouldn't we be riled? If Gabo thinks so, he hasn't exerted himself to make us feel it. He's coy and careful, like a graduate student so dutiful that the grand idea dies somewhere in the footnotes—as if the French Revolution weren't still being fought all over Latin America, as if Bolívar hadn't embodied its contradictions, a one-man Diderot's *Encyclopedia*.

You'd think the mistress Manuela would excite every color on his palette, besides giving him something Octavio Paz–like to say about Latin politicians and the way they use their women as virgins, whores, witches, mothers and muses. But he devotes more passion to a one-night stand in Lima with "a young girl who was covered with fine, straight down over every millimeter of her Bedouin skin." What the General does to this girl as she sleeps is to lather and shave off every millimeter of down and hair on her, leaving her "doubly naked inside her magnificent newborn's body."

It's a heartbreaking scene, suggesting demonic possession, and it's lonely in this novel, leading nowhere. Gabo's remarkably incurious as to what Bolívar imagined he might need or find in bed, except for a sponge and a sword. What about that sad first marriage, or the psychology of orphans? Gabo hasn't before had to Freudianize any of his characters because he's always been able to pull a miracle or an angel or a ghost out of his hat, to symbolize and subvert the usual difficult emotions. But Bolívar, the enemy of superstition and thus an enemy of angels and ghosts, is naked to history, a target for every determinism going, and Gabo seems unwilling to help him.

Why should Bolívar be *less* complicated than the lightweight Littín, *less* substantial than the Patriarch? The Patriarch, however thick with memory and grudge, was also resonant, whereas Bolívar is a shadow of his deeds, a string of scrappy quotes, an unpersuasive dream or two—his vagaries and guilts piled on like pick-up sticks and poked at with such diffidence you'd think they were combustible. The novelist in the archives has been too timid with his razor to go deep, as if fearful of nicking himself, or maybe of cutting the symbolic throat of his symbolic father. If Gabo can't shamanize the Liberator, safely dead, how is he ever going to do the job that's needed on his personal and living albatross, the *barbudo* Fidel? The corruptions of power need all the magic they can get. As the angel comes and the mirror clouds and the clock stops and the radiant voices of the slaves from his childhood sugar mill sing at a morning star, it seems that Simón and Gabo might finally connect, but this is the last delirium and the last page, too late for me, or fiction, or history. □

Time Bomb

WALTER SCHNEIR

KHRUSHCHEV REMEMBERS: The Glasnost Tapes. *Translated and edited by Jerrold L. Schecter, with Vyacheslav V. Luchkov. Little, Brown. 219 pp. $19.95.*

Thirty-seven years after the executions of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg a new witness for the prosecution has appeared: Joseph Stalin himself. Nikita Khrushchev is said to have revealed in a tape-recorded memoir that he was present when Stalin "mentioned the Rosenbergs with warmth." Khrushchev added that he "heard from both Stalin and Molotov that the Rosenbergs provided very significant help in accelerating the production of our atomic bomb." The amazing story was made public in late September by *Time*, which ran eight pages of excerpts from *Khrushchev Remembers: The Glasnost Tapes*, a book just published by Little, Brown and Company, a Time-Warner subsidiary. An unquestioning mass media responded with wide-eyed coverage.

But an investigation for *The Nation* has uncovered a deception: The highly touted Khrushchev tape on the Rosenbergs is of such dubious authenticity that any serious scholar would have to declare it worthless.

My investigation was prompted by several historical incongruities in the statement attributed to Khrushchev, most notably the assertion that the Rosenbergs provided "significant help" to the Russians. No student of the case today, including one who assumes the Rosenbergs to have been guilty, believes that in 1945 David Greenglass, a 22-year-old, uneducated machinist stationed at Los Alamos, could have given the Soviet Union information that, in the words of *Time*'s publicity release, was "instrumental in allowing the Soviets to achieve nuclear parity with the United States."

Nevertheless, every television network and most major newspapers featured the Rosenberg story prominently; *The New York Times* even carried an editorial asserting that "since Khrushchev was in a position to know, and since he had no reason to lie, his words make it harder to argue that the Rosenbergs were innocent victims of cold war hysteria." Not a single member of the mass-media fraternity expressed any reservations about the authenticity of the incriminating tape.

Where had the Rosenberg tape been secreted in the eighteen years since Khrushchev's death?

What I set out to discover was seemingly simple: Had Khrushchev really said on a tape recording what the new book credits him with saying about the Rosenbergs? But, as I was to learn, finding an answer to this straightforward question is not easy.

At Columbia University's Oral History Research Office, I spoke to its director, Ronald Grele, one of the nation's most highly regarded specialists in the field. I asked Grele what procedure he would follow if a tape were brought to him with the claim that the voice on it was that of some famous historical figure. Grele described the accepted scholarly methodology for establishing the authenticity of such an audiotape. First one tries to determine the provenance of the

Walter Schneir is co-author, with Miriam Schneir, of Invitation to an Inquest *(Pantheon), a study of the Rosenberg case.*

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tape by studying the "paper trail" detailing its origins. If the provenance of the tape cannot be traced, a voiceprint analysis can be employed to compare the voice on the tape with a known recorded sample of the famous person's voice.

In 1970, when the initial volume of Khrushchev's taped reminiscences appeared, a number of eminent scholars were skeptical and thought the memoirs might be a C.I.A. or K.G.B. forgery. However, several years later the Khrushchev tape recordings themselves were made accessible for study, along with a voiceprint report attesting to their authenticity. As the historian Edward Crankshaw noted in 1974 in his foreword to volume two of the memoirs, "all the tapes have been subjected to the ingenious process known as voiceprinting, analogous to fingerprinting, and have passed the test."

In an introduction to that same 1974 volume, *Time*'s former Moscow bureau chief, Jerrold Schecter, said that Khrushchev had recorded his recollections between 1967 and his death in 1971, but that other specifics concerning the tapes had to be kept secret. However, Schecter described in considerable detail the technique of voiceprinting used to test the 180 hours of tapes from which volumes one and two were both culled, and the favorable results that had been obtained. "An independent firm of recognized voiceprint experts, Voice Identification Services," had subjected the 180 hours to spectrographic analysis and positively identified 175.5 hours, or 97.5 percent, as the voice of Khrushchev. Thus the authenticity of the tapes used for the first two volumes was settled.

Volume three, *The Glasnost Tapes*, is a different story. The just-published memoir contains a foreword by *Time* editor Strobe Talbott, who translated and edited the previous volumes. Talbott explains that some politically sensitive passages had been deleted from the original 180 hours of tape and that in 1989 "we acquired tapes with the missing sections intact." In all, more than 120 hours of tapes were obtained last year. These new tapes were an oddly mixed bag, consisting not only of tapes with the missing sections restored but also of tapes that had previously been withheld in their entirety, many of which repetitiously "covered the same ground as the earlier tapes." Apparently, no more than a small fraction of this mishmash of perhaps a million words was deemed usable, because the slim volume that was fashioned from it is hardly one-third the size of either of

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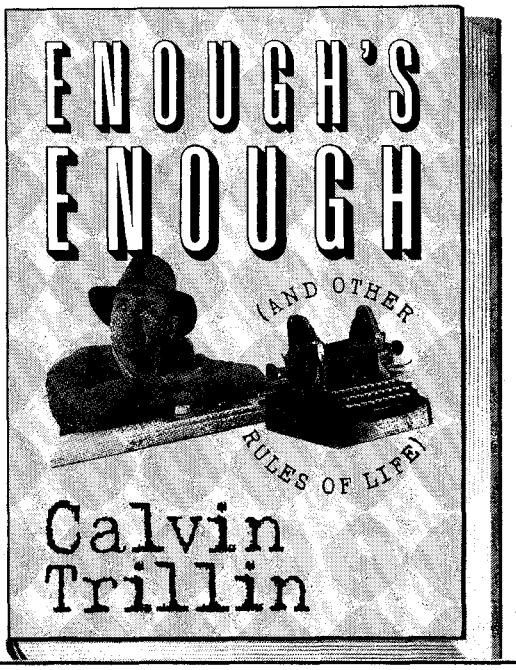

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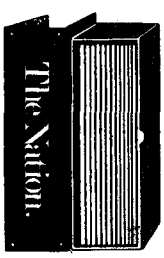

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the other two and contains only about 80,000 words.

Where had these more than 120 hours of tapes been secreted in the eighteen years since Khrushchev's death? Were they scattered or kept together? Who had access to them during that long period? What assurances do we have that none of them were tampered with, either by intelligence organizations—inspired by who knows what byzantine motives—or by others eager for hard currency from the West? Where specifically was the Rosenberg tape stored and by whom? Talbott's foreword avoids all explicit questions relating to provenance. However, he does inform the reader of the measures taken to establish the authenticity of the tapes, recounting details of the voiceprint analysis performed by Voice Identification Services.

But here a curious and troubling omission occurs in Talbott's explanation. The voiceprint authentication he describes was that done in 1973 on the initial 180 hours of tape from which the first two volumes were derived. What about volume three? Talbott says not a word about any voiceprint analysis of the 120 hours of tapes newly acquired in 1989. How to solve this intriguing mystery?

No one at Little, Brown could help, because no one at the publishing firm seems to know anything substantive about the Khrushchev book. No editors or other editorial personnel were assigned to work on it. At the firm's main office, in Boston, a member of the copy-editing department told me, the day after the news stories broke, that "the book was kept completely secret, so I knew nothing about it until yesterday." To say that Little, Brown printed and distributed *The Glasnost Tapes* would be more accurate than to say that they published it.

Actual responsibility for *The Glasnost Tapes* was in the hands of a small, self-contained group in Washington associated with *Time*. One member of the group, Jef Olivarius McAllister, who assisted with the editing, informed me that he had never dealt with the actual tapes. McAllister, a *Time* correspondent, said he had been provided with a first draft in English of four of the eight chapters in the book but had not worked on the chapter in which the Rosenberg material appears. Who had worked on that chapter? McAllister didn't know and explained, "I was just given discrete bits like a good intelligence operation and not involved really in overall planning of it." Describing himself as "only a small cog," he suggested that I talk to Talbott or Schecter.

Talbott's office sent word that I was to refer all questions about the tapes to Schecter, who had translated and edited *The Glasnost Tapes*. Schecter explained to me that he had worked directly with the recordings, noting that "the quality of these tapes is terrible." I inquired if the new tapes had been checked with voiceprint analysis. Schecter replied, "We checked some of them, yes."

The Oral History Research Office at Columbia University includes in its collection—the largest in the United States—180 hours of Khrushchev audiotapes, donated by Time Inc., along with a copy of a 1973 report by Voice Identification Services attesting to the tapes' authenticity. The seventeen-page report is accompanied by a cover letter from a specialist who performed the voiceprint analysis, Ernst F.W. Alexanderson.

At Voice Identification Services, in Manville, New Jersey, I talked with Alexanderson and mentioned the new book, *The Glasnost Tapes*. Had he worked on those tapes? Alexanderson replied, "A few. I was sent a few of them by *Time* and they were just very select sections that they asked me to look at." Did he work with the section that included material on the Rosenbergs? Alexanderson said he had been asked to look at the Rosenberg section. At first reluctant to discuss the matter, he agreed to do so when I informed him that the book referred to his firm in the foreword.

Alexanderson explained that in the summer of 1990 *Time* had sent to him for voiceprint analysis tapes about whose provenance he knew nothing. "As far as knowing where they came from or where they've been, I'm totally in the dark." He said he had been asked to examine three different sections of tape that totaled between six and eight hours and had found that only one of those sections "was good enough to work with." The other two—including the section that mentioned the Rosenbergs—could not be checked for authenticity with voiceprint analysis because "the quality of the recordings was really, really poor." He said he had gone through a long section of tape that contained the Rosenberg material, about an hour or an hour and a half, "to see if there was anything in there that I could work with, and I couldn't."

I posed a hypothetical question to Ronald Grele at Columbia. What would

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his reaction be if, given an audiotape for which it was claimed that the speaker was a historical figure, he found that the paper trail was inadequate and the tape itself was acoustically very poor—too poor to do a voiceprint analysis? Grele answered: "Well, then you would say this is a very dubious kind of thing. People make the claim that it is this, but we have no way of verifying it. We just wouldn't deal with it. We wouldn't make it public. No one would ever want to use it."

The discovery this past summer that much of the material in *The Glasnost Tapes* cannot be authenticated by voiceprint analysis must have posed a dilemma for *Time* and Little, Brown. One choice would have been to cancel the book before publication. Another would have been to publish the book and reveal to readers the dubious nature of the tapes. They chose to do neither; instead they published the book as planned and resorted to a cover-up.

In the foreword to the book, the successful voiceprinting of the first two volumes is described, lending a false implication that the new material has been similarly checked. The whole thing is done so deftly that most readers are likely to come away from the foreword with the erroneous impression that *all* the tapes were tested by voiceprinting and found authentic. It appears that the intention is, in fact, to deceive the reader.

But there is more. Five paragraphs of Rosenberg material run consecutively in the book on pages 193 and 194. However, in my conversation with Schecter, he made a startling disclosure: This Rosenberg material is actually a composite, brought together from at least two different places on the tape. As Schecter explained, on the tape Khrushchev says that "there are a lot of people who helped us, and they weren't Communists. . . . That's in one place, and he doesn't mention anybody by name. Then in another place . . . he goes into this thing about the Rosenbergs."

Confirmation that the Rosenberg material appears in two different places on the tape came from Schecter's associate in translating and editing *The Glasnost Tapes*, Vyacheslav Luchkov. A former senior fellow with the Harriman Institute, Luchkov also told me that he had prepared from the tapes a verbatim Russian transcript. I asked if he would send me copies of the Rosenberg references and of the preceding and following pages so that I could examine the context. He refused, explaining, "I cannot, because that's not my property."

Luchkov is puzzled by the great attention given the Rosenberg material, observing that "even if Stalin or Molotov had mentioned some other name" Khrushchev might have erroneously recalled the well-known Rosenbergs. "If you're really interested in the truth about the events of that time, I think this is not the place to look for it." Luchkov's low opinion of Khrushchev's reliability for facts was apparently shared by others familiar with the memoirs. In volume two readers were forewarned by Edward Crankshaw of "inaccuracies," "distortions," "contradictions" and "downright lies"; by Schecter of Khrushchev's tendency to forget or confuse names; and by Talbott of Khrushchev's deserved reputation as a "windbag." But no such caveats appear in volume three.

I arranged to have two Russian-speaking scholars available to listen to the Khrushchev tape with the Rosenberg material. The next step was to locate the tapes. The foreword to *The Glasnost Tapes* indicated that at least some of the new tapes were already "part of the now considerably expanded collection of tapes and tran-

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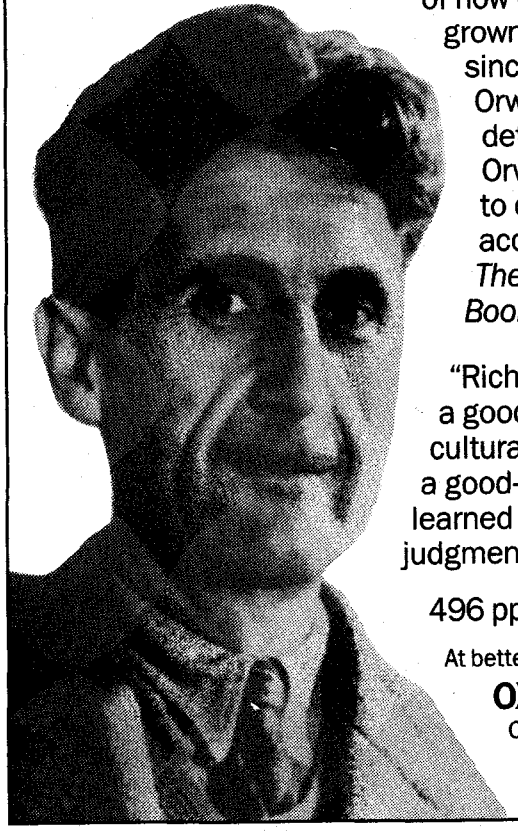

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scripts that resides at Columbia and is open to scholars." But at Columbia neither the Harriman Institute nor the Oral History Research Office had any knowledge of the new tapes. I then asked Schecter for access to the Rosenberg tape. He said it would not be available until the tapes were turned over to Columbia. When would that be? "I don't know. In the next couple of months, I guess." Pressed, he said the tapes would be given to Columbia "probably in October." Why couldn't I hear that one tape now? Schecter replied, "They're in the process of being turned over. They're being packed at this point." He said the tapes were not in his possession. Where were they? He answered, variously, "Time Inc. has the tapes" and "The publisher has them." I decided to try the publisher first.

Roger Donald is the publisher of the trade division of Little, Brown. When I told him that I needed access to the tape on the Rosenbergs, Donald answered: "Well, you can't get access to the tape on the Rosenbergs until the material is turned over to Columbia. . . . They've got to catalogue the stuff." Did he have possession of the tapes? "No, I do not. . . . I don't know actually who has physically got them at the moment." Donald was on his way to the book fair in Frankfurt and said he would try to reach me from there. I attempted to contact him again. He never responded.

Finally, I faxed a letter to Talbott at *Time*'s Washington office, notifying him that I was preparing an article about *The Glasnost Tapes* in which I intended "to raise questions about the authenticity of the material about the Rosenbergs." I asked for immediate access to the tape, either at Columbia University or at some other mutually convenient location. "Whatever future plans you may have for establishing a repository for these latest tapes," I wrote, "should not preclude a study of one of the tapes now. It is elementary fairness that the source material of a book be available at the time that book is published and especially during the period when the book is being considered by reviewers."

Talbott phoned me within minutes and said he understood my "particular interest in the passages about the Rosenbergs. The very first time that we had a chance to listen to the tapes we knew that there were maybe two sticks of dynamite in the whole material," and one was the Rosenberg item. "I know the importance this case continues to have, and I think you're absolutely right to focus on it."

As he had in his foreword to *The Glasnost Tapes*, Talbott talked at length about the history of the memoir project. When he alluded to the 1973 voiceprint report, I interrupted to ask him if he had a voiceprint report on the Rosenberg tape and other tapes obtained in 1989. Talbott answered: "We did some voiceprinting on them. Unfortunately . . . it's harder to get a conclusive finding on these. But . . . neither we nor the voiceprint lab has any doubt whatsoever that it's Khrushchev." Could I see that report? Talbott hesitated: "Yeah, I think so—if it exists in written form."

Volume three of the Khrushchev memoirs is represented as a book composed of formerly forbidden material excised from the tapes in the 1970s and now, in the era of *glasnost*, somehow acquired by *Time*. The reality behind this fable is that most of the new material was not "too hot to handle"—as the Little, Brown ads say—but too dull to publish. Readily admitting that most of the new material was repetitious, Talbott revealed: "If we were to have published a transcript, even if it were tidied up a bit, of everything that we received in 1989, it would be a book at least as long as the

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earlier two and maybe longer. But most people would regard it as virtually a reissue of the earlier books. . . . What you see is what we came up with, the stuff that seemed genuinely very fresh—the Rosenbergs being something that made our eyes pop out right when we read it." Talbott failed to explain why the simply repetitious material should have been withheld for so many years. Neither would he say where and in whose hands these tapes, both repetitious and eye-popping, had been for the past two decades.

As for access to the Rosenberg tape, Talbott said he could not meet my deadline. The tapes would be turned over to Columbia around mid-October. I offered to delay my article. Why couldn't I have just that one tape within the next week? "Let me raise this with my colleagues to see if there's anything we can do." At the very least, could I be shown pages from the Russian verbatim transcript? Talbott replied, "Let me see if we can get you something like that in the near term. . . . I'll get back to you." I added, At the same time, would you let me know about the voiceprint report? Talbott answered, "Will do."

The answer was faxed to me by Talbott the next morning. He wrote: "I've tried and failed to arrange for you to have a look within the next several days at the portion of the Khrushchev material you're interested in. . . . We're proceeding with our plans to make all the material—tapes, transcripts, voiceprint analysis, et cetera—available to all interested parties at Columbia. . . . It will then need to be catalogued and otherwise sorted out, but in due course it should be ready for your inspection and anyone else's."

On March 12, 1974, a memorandum was written at *Time* titled "Re: the unauthenticated portions of the Khrushchev tapes." The author was Strobe Talbott. The memo discussed the reasons why the brief portions of the tapes that Voice Identification Services had been unable to authenticate were not suspect. First, Talbott explained that he had "reviewed the unauthenticated portions of the tapes and found that they do *not* include the more highly controversial passages" of either volume one or two. In addition, "some of the contents of the unauthenticated 2.5 percent of the tapes is repeated elsewhere in the 97.5 percent which is authenticated."

In volume two, published that same year, Jerrold Schecter informed readers that short portions of the tapes had not been authenticated, and he specified the subjects dealt with in the unauthenticated passages. Schecter reassured readers that there was not "anything so surprising or controversial in the content of these passages as to raise the suspicion that anyone other than Khrushchev was speaking."

But in the foreword to volume three the reader is not similarly enlightened, though approximately two-thirds of the new tapes submitted for testing could not be authenticated by voiceprint analysis. Moreover, the unauthenticated passage on the Rosenbergs—the "dynamite"—fits Talbott's definition as suspect because it is both surprising and controversial, and it is not repeated elsewhere in the tapes.

At present, two months after the Rosenberg story first broke, the recently acquired Khrushchev tapes are in a strange limbo. Talbott has handed them over physically to Columbia's oral history archive with the proviso that they not be heard by anyone until a formal deed of gift is received from the Time-Warner legal department. He did not provide transcripts, voiceprint analysis or any other identifying information. As Ronald Grele explained, "It's just a pile of forty or fifty tapes and we have no idea what's on which tape."

What can be said now with certainty about the Rosenberg tape is that its provenance is shadowy, its authenticity dubious and its content fabricated in the book by patching together material from at least two different places in the recording—and perhaps by far worse. The stonewalling by *Time* and Little, Brown concerning my request to hear the tape does not inspire confidence.

Meanwhile, an internationally important work of history is being distributed to reviewers and readers without any of the source material available for inspection. In the foreword to that book a clever ploy is utilized to hide the fact that much of the material in *The Glasnost Tapes* cannot be authenticated by voiceprint analysis. For Little, Brown it would be decent conduct to withdraw the book. □

Rabbit's Run

THOMAS M. DISCH

RABBIT AT REST. *By John Updike. Knopf. 512 pp. $21.95.*

I must begin by confessing a fondness for the character of Harry Angstrom that has little to do with literary discrimination. I think of him the way soap opera fans are supposed to regard the characters on the programs they watch, as though he were a real person, a distant but beloved member of the family, and I feel the same say-it-isn't-so sense of loss, at the end of his tetralogy (and of his life), that made Sherlock Holmes's fans implore Conan Doyle to restore their hero to life. Except that I know the rules for serious literature and medical science don't work that way, and that nothing can be done for Rabbit's heart. Rabbit is dead.

It has, therefore, been distressing to read reviews of *Rabbit at Rest* that speak of Harry Angstrom with the kind of contumely usually reserved for pro wrestling villains. Donna Rifkind of *The Wall Street Journal* declared Rabbit to be "an almost entirely antipathetic character." Bruce Bawer in *The New Criterion*, while having good things to say about the Rabbit books ("Tense, taut, and suggestive . . . a fine example of that demanding genre, the acute, fluent study of a not very acute or fluent protagonist") came down on Rabbit for possessing "a crippling sensibility" and being "an odious character" and, overall, someone derelict in his sense of duty.

The most unremitting critic of Rabbit, however, was Garry Wills in *The New York Review of Books*, who both deplores Rabbit as an implausible and unconvincing character *and* belabors him for his sins, as though he had been plucked living from the decades' headlines. "Though he is supposed to have been the local star [of his basketball team]," Wills marvels, "we hear of no college or semi-pro scouts interested in him. He plays no pick-up ball with young adults—just one pathetic game, in his street clothes, with some unwelcoming teenagers. He does not attend games, or even watch them on TV. Harry's dreams of basketball are a satiric device stuck onto his character rather than an expression of a real athlete's love of the game." Rabbit is also reprehended for thinking in "purple passages," though he "is not a reader." Rabbit's pro-war opinions in *Rabbit Redux* are held to be an expres-

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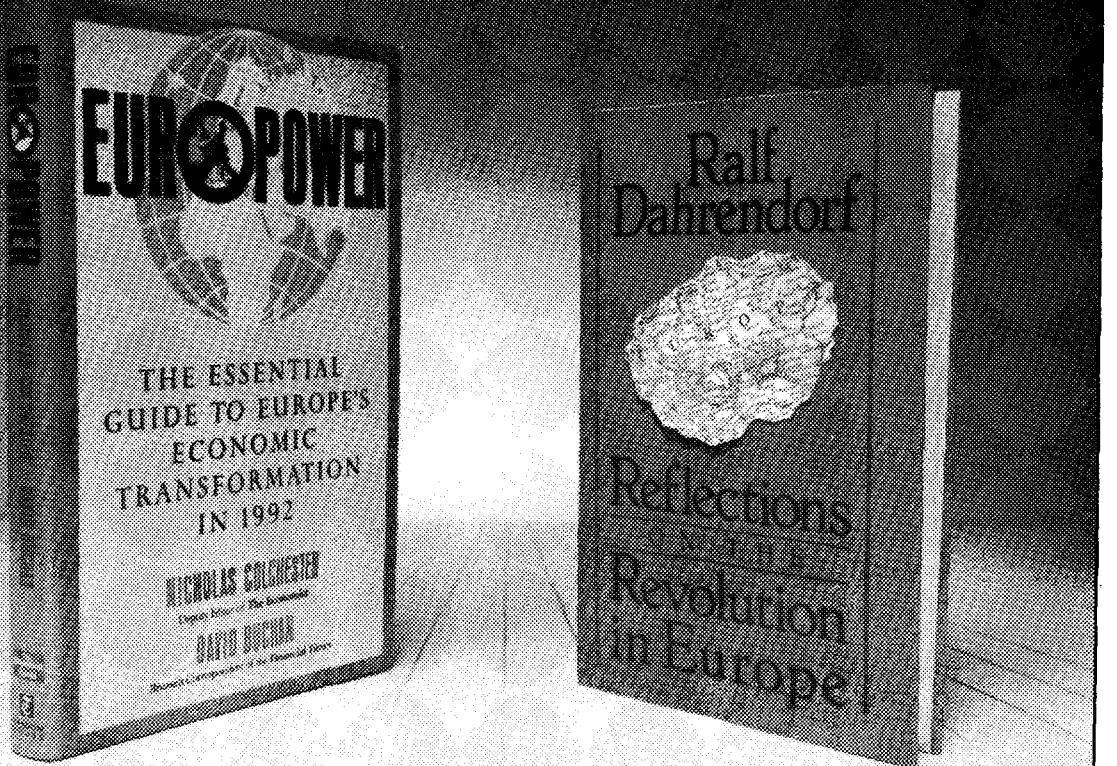
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sion of "the reactionary dandyism [John Updike] shares with Tom Wolfe and William Buckley." But Rabbit's worst sin is that he constantly serves as Updike's doppelgänger: "Rabbit even has Updike's teeth, and his habit of finding lost food in them." Wills seems to believe that Harry Angstrom is not a fictional character at all but John Updike in disguise, and thus doubly reprehensible:

> Harry's creator has lost track of what he originally meant him to mean. Rabbit loves the feel-good Reagan years; but, as usual, it is Updike the aesthete who speaks through Harry the slob: "The guy [Reagan] had a magic touch. He was a dream man. Harry dares say, 'Under Reagan, you know, it was like anaesthesia.' "

I would put Rabbit on a par with Mr. Pickwick or Leopold Bloom: one of the great originals.

As to Rabbit's plausibility and consistency as a character, I would put him on a par with Mr. Pickwick or Leopold Bloom: one of the great originals, a type at once profoundly self-consistent and always full of surprises. He is also, again like Pickwick or Bloom, emblematic of his class, his country and his era. By the time he leads the 1989 Mt. Judge Fourth of July parade in the costume of Uncle Sam, he really has come to embody the Spirit of America. In Updike's allegory, this is both a tragic and a comic fate, for Rabbit is now overweight, out of shape and just about ready to self-destruct because his arteries are "full of crud." However, he accepts his condition with a characteristic blithe grace, goes on eating the junk food that is killing him and at the end of the parade has one of those epiphanies Updike's critics seem to think those of his low station aren't entitled to:

> closer to the front [of the parade], on a scratchy tape through crackling speakers, Kate Smith belts out, dead as she is, dragged into the grave by sheer gangrenous weight, "God Bless America"—" . . . to the oceans, white with *foam*." Harry's eyes burn and the impression giddily—as if he has been lifted up to survey all human history—grows upon him, making his heart thump worse and worse, that all in all this is the happiest fucking country the world has ever seen.

That passage nicely illustrates the fundamental magic trick of the four Rabbit books, the mix of high diction and demotic speech that conveys Rabbit's most fleeting perceptions in speech that flickeringly is and is not his. In "dead as she is" you can hear a kind of redneck affirmation, but "sheer gangrenous weight" is not intended as precise verbal stream-of-consciousness; rather, it is Updike's own rendering of the image in Harry's mind, just as the parenthetical phrase splitting "the impression giddily" and "grows upon him" is not meant to echo Rabbit's own rhythms of speech but to imitate the giddiness it describes, and to set up the final marvelous affirmation, which *can* be understood as direct quotation of Rabbit's subvocalized thoughts.

It's clear from Wills's review that his mental wiring doesn't accommodate Updike's alternating current. Wills is simply unable or unwilling to read Updike's prose; to him it's "stylistic solipsism" and "Keatsian images." *Real* atha-letes, Wills would have us believe, love the game and don't go soft, and real men don't see the world as something continuously fresh and beautiful. However, it is at the very root of Rabbit's character (and Updike's inspiration) that he experiences the vicissitudes and the trivia of a representative middle-class life with the finely tuned sensual intelligence of his creator. Bawer is mistaken in supposing Rabbit is "not very acute or fluent." Rabbit simply applies his acuity and fluency to ends Bawer deems unworthy. In Bawer's estimation Rabbit is constantly guilty of thought crimes. By way of demonstrating that Rabbit is "remarkably obnoxious," Bawer offers two quotes: "It gives him pleasure, makes Rabbit feel rich, to contemplate the world's wasting, to know that the earth is mortal too" and, "The great thing about the dead, they make space." For having such thoughts Rabbit forfeits, according to Bawer, any claim to "our interest or empathy."

Such philosophical commonplaces in the context of a poem would raise no eyebrows. Why it is particularly reprehensible for Rabbit to have such thoughts is because he has established himself as a representative figure. It won't do for All-America to be irreverent about Death. Rabbit's progressive disillusionment in the course of the tetralogy, his careless amorality and rabbity philandering, and now, in this last volume, his utterly secu-

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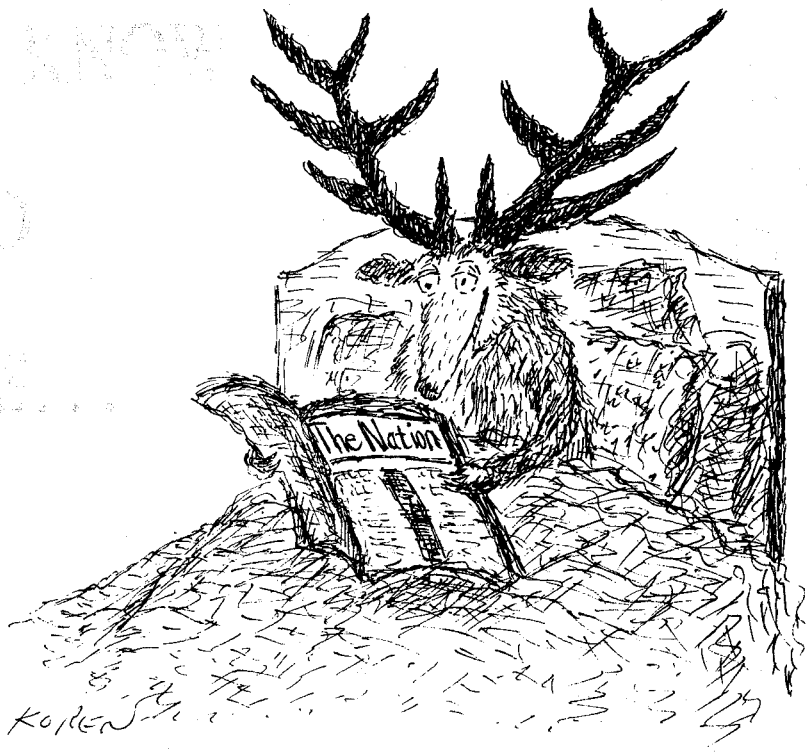

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lar and *untroubled* approach to death—these are what have given such offense to Rabbit/Updike's critics, and such delight to his admirers.

Rabbit is not intended as a "role model." In many ways Nemesis punishes him for his sins quite severely in *Rabbit at Rest*. His son avenges himself for decades of emotional neglect by bankrupting the family's auto business to pay for his cocaine habit. Rabbit's much-put-upon wife cooperates gleefully in accelerating the family's downward mobility. And Rabbit's lechery finally gets him into a real pickle. The beauty of the story—its central delicious irony—is that despite all Nemesis can do, Rabbit somehow escapes without hurt, and his dying words to his distraught son are, "Well, Nelson, all I can tell you is, it isn't so bad."

Surely one of the reasons I've enjoyed these books so much is that I see myself and "my people" mirrored in them as in no other work of American fiction I've read. Most literary accounts of middle-class life, from Flaubert to Sinclair Lewis, have been satirical and dismissive, while popular fiction sentimentalizes and sanitizes Middle America out of recognition. Updike's Rabbit and the landscape he inhabits more closely resemble the world I've witnessed during the time span of the four novels—1959 through 1989—than any other work of American literature I know. And it does what art can in the way of redeeming the world it represents by valorizing its commonplaces. For me that makes the Rabbit tetralogy the best large-scale literary work by an American in this century (including the many-volumed magnum opuses of Dos Passos, Dreiser and Faulkner), and Updike the best American writer. Someone has finally written, albeit inadvertently and in the form of a tetralogy, the Great American Novel.

I'm a little surprised to find myself so far out on a critical limb, since I don't have a similar high regard for the rest of Updike's *oeuvre*. He is often prolix, especially on the subjects of religion and sex. When his fiction mirrors his own circumstances too closely, it can be plain boring. But in the Rabbit books his gifts found their perfect focus in a character who is the mirror of our age. Here he is, on page 10 of *Rabbit, Run*, watching Jimmy the Mouseketeer giving his viewers a lesson in class consciousness as he explains what the Greeks meant when they said "Know Thyself," concluding his lesson by pinching his mouth together and winking:

> That was good. Rabbit tries that, pinching the mouth together and then the wink, getting the audience out front with you against some enemy behind, Walt Disney or the MagiPeel Peeler Company, admitting it's all a fraud but, what the hell, making it likable. We're all in it together. Fraud makes the world go round. The base of our economy.

This is exactly the Rabbit who will later defend Reagan by likening him to anaesthesia. If Wills is right in thinking this is Updike the aesthete speaking through Harry the slob, the implication would seem to be that the *real* Harry Angstroms of the world take Reagan, and Jimmy the Mouseketeer, at face value; that when they vote for Reagan or Bush they are being the guileless dupes of the media and credulous believers in ads that insult a moron's intelligence. That's a dismal thing to suppose. I'd rather believe in Updike's America, where Harry Angstrom knows Reagan is a fraud, and is a fraud himself, and votes for him in a spirit of friendly collusion. At least in Updike's world it's possible to have something to talk about with your neighbors, a common ground, a shared reality.

Fraud is the governing principle of Rabbit's and Reagan's America. *Rabbit at Rest* opens in the fool's paradise of a Florida retirement colony, where the retirees while away their declining days in a parody of childhood, playing at sports and puttering at handicrafts. Rabbit golfs enough now to satisfy even the stringent athletic requirements of Garry Wills, and off the course his conversation rarely strays from those two mainstays of manly discourse, sports and cars, except with those he knows well enough to discuss what really concerns him, which is now, and always has been, sex.

But in every one of these categories, Rabbit's life (and so America's) is a hollow shell that, like his heart, is "full of crud." His first heart attack is brought on when, having rented a sailboat he can't operate, he has an accident that almost kills his granddaughter. Aerobically, his golf game is a sham, since he rides a cart about the course instead of walking it. At the end of the book he ruptures his heart after taking on a black teenager one-on-one at basketball. So much for the world of sports.

The third volume of the series, *Rabbit Is Rich*, already got much mileage

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out of the irony that the model American earns his living from a Toyota dealership. In *Rabbit at Rest* Nelson has taken control of the dealership, and with the collusion of a gay accountant dying of AIDS he creates a miniature version of the S&L crisis. The scene in which a representative from Toyota headquarters appears to announce that the franchise is being withdrawn is cruel and tasteless and a precise scale model of Japanese-American relations in A.D. 1989:

> "Arways," [Mr. Shimada] says, "we in Japan admire America. As boy during Occupation, rooked way up to big GI soldiers, their happy, easy-go ways. Enemy soldiers, but not bad men. . . . Japanese very humble at first in regard to America. You know Toyota story. At first, very modest, then bigger, we produce a better product for the rittle man's money, yes? You ask for it, we got it, yes?"

So much for the great American product, which has figured at the center of the Rabbit tetralogy from the now classic set-piece in *Rabbit, Run*, when Rabbit, spooked by a sudden unaccustomed attack of self-awareness, flees Mt. Judge and his marriage and drives off for nowhere until he stops short, caught in the highway system, as in a net: "The names melt away and he sees the map whole, a net, all those red and blue lines and stars, a net he is somewhere caught in." In *Rabbit at Rest* there is a matching set-piece as Rabbit again finds himself on the road, taking the sum of America from its roadside garbage and radio broadcasts. But this time, "The dashboard lights of the Celica glow beneath his line of vision like the lights of a city about to be bombed." This time,

> Rabbit fumbles with the scan button but can't find another oldies station, just talk shows, drunks calling in, the host sounding punchy himself, his mouth running on automatic pilot, abortion, nuclear waste, unemployment among young black males, CIA complicity in the AIDS epidemic, Boesky, Milken, Bush and North, Noriega, you can't tell me that—Rabbit switches the radio off, hating the sound of the human voice. Vermin. We are noisy vermin, crowding even the air. Better the murmur of the tires, the green road signs looming in the lights and parabolically enlarging and then whisked out of sight like magicians' handkerchiefs.

So in Updike's last analysis, the automobile is revealed as a kind of incarnate death wish—and that may be, as well, its place in history, once the greenhouse effect kicks in. This sense of the nation and the planet spinning out of control or hurtling to ruin is omnipresent in *Rabbit at Rest*, and what most distresses Updike's critics is that, to quote the line that Bawer particularly comminates, "It gives him pleasure . . . to contemplate the world's wasting." But if Updike is to be reprehended for his tragic vision, what of Shakespeare or Sophocles?

As for sex, that has always been Rabbit's strong suit, the source of his most blissful insights and his major difficulties. Always until now. Rabbit continues to be sexually active but no longer at fever pitch. There is a valedictory air to his couplings. And that may be what most aggrieves his critics—that he's old and fat and tired out and finally dead without any angel chorus of redemption, with scarcely a tip of the hat to the decorous Protestant God who loomed so large in the first volume. In this regard, Updike's writerly genius has triumphed over his penchant for theologizing. Indeed, in the way of other archetypal literary figures, Rabbit seems to have an ampler spirit than his creator. It may be that in the mirrored relation between Rabbit and Updike, it is Updike who derives from Rabbit, not vice versa; that in the process of inventing Rabbit he discovered his own larger nature. One of the most painful sadnesses at the end of *Rabbit at Rest* is the sense that Updike is saying goodbye to us, much as Shakespeare says goodbye in *The Tempest*. Surely nothing he writes in the future can hope to exceed or match the greatness of the Rabbit tetralogy. It's all over now. Rabbit is dead.

Now, it's America's turn. □

The Crossroads of Our Being

LEWIS COLE

PERSONAL MEMOIRS OF U.S. GRANT. *Library of America. 1,199 pp. $35.*

MEMOIRS OF GENERAL W.T. SHERMAN. *Library of America. 1,136 pp. $35.*

THE CIVIL WAR: An Illustrated History. *By Geoffrey C. Ward, with Ric Burns and Ken Burns. Knopf. 425 pp. $50.*

THE CIVIL WAR. *A film by Ken Burns. Produced by Ken Burns and Ric Burns. Written by Geoffrey C. Ward, Ric Burns and Ken Burns.*

In his majestic, homespun *Memoirs*, Ulysses S. Grant writes, "As time passes people . . . will begin to wonder how it was possible that their ancestors ever fought for or justified institutions which acknowledged the right of property in man." Grant's optimism—one of this modern hero's most endearing traits—has proved more prodigious than precise. Far from wondering how their forebears fought for slavery, most Americans barely acknowledge slavery as a reason for the war. Indeed, 125 years after the fighting, the argument that slavery served as the war's excuse, rather than its cause, continues its career as one of the most popular misconceptions of our history; promoted at every cultural level—*Gone With the Wind* for the masses, Edmund Wilson's *Patriotic Gore* for the elite—it attracts adherents from both left and right whose conviction withstands seemingly irresistible assaults of logic, imagination and evidence.

"Our new government is founded on the opposite idea of the equality of the races," Confederate Vice President Alexander Stephens declared in his inaugural address. "Its cornerstone rests upon the great truth that the Negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery . . . is his natural and normal condition. . . . This government is the first in the history of the world, based upon this great physical and moral truth."

Stephens's assertion defines the Confederacy and its cause. Slavery—in the pithy phrase of the abolitionists—was the sum of all evils. Many conflicts—regional, cultural, economic—centered on slavery and contributed to the growing national crisis. But slavery also had a life of its own, following its own course and stressing to the breaking point conflicts between race and democracy, labor and freedom. Without slavery Shiloh and Cold Harbor would never have been fought; and the contention that the war was about Northern expansion and that slavery was merely a sideshow or a useful propaganda gambit is a denial of the historic role blacks play in American life and the momentous lurch the national

Lewis Cole is author, most recently, of Never Too Young to Die: The Death of Len Bias *(Pantheon). He is at work with David Hilliard on a book about Hilliard's life and the Black Panther Party.*

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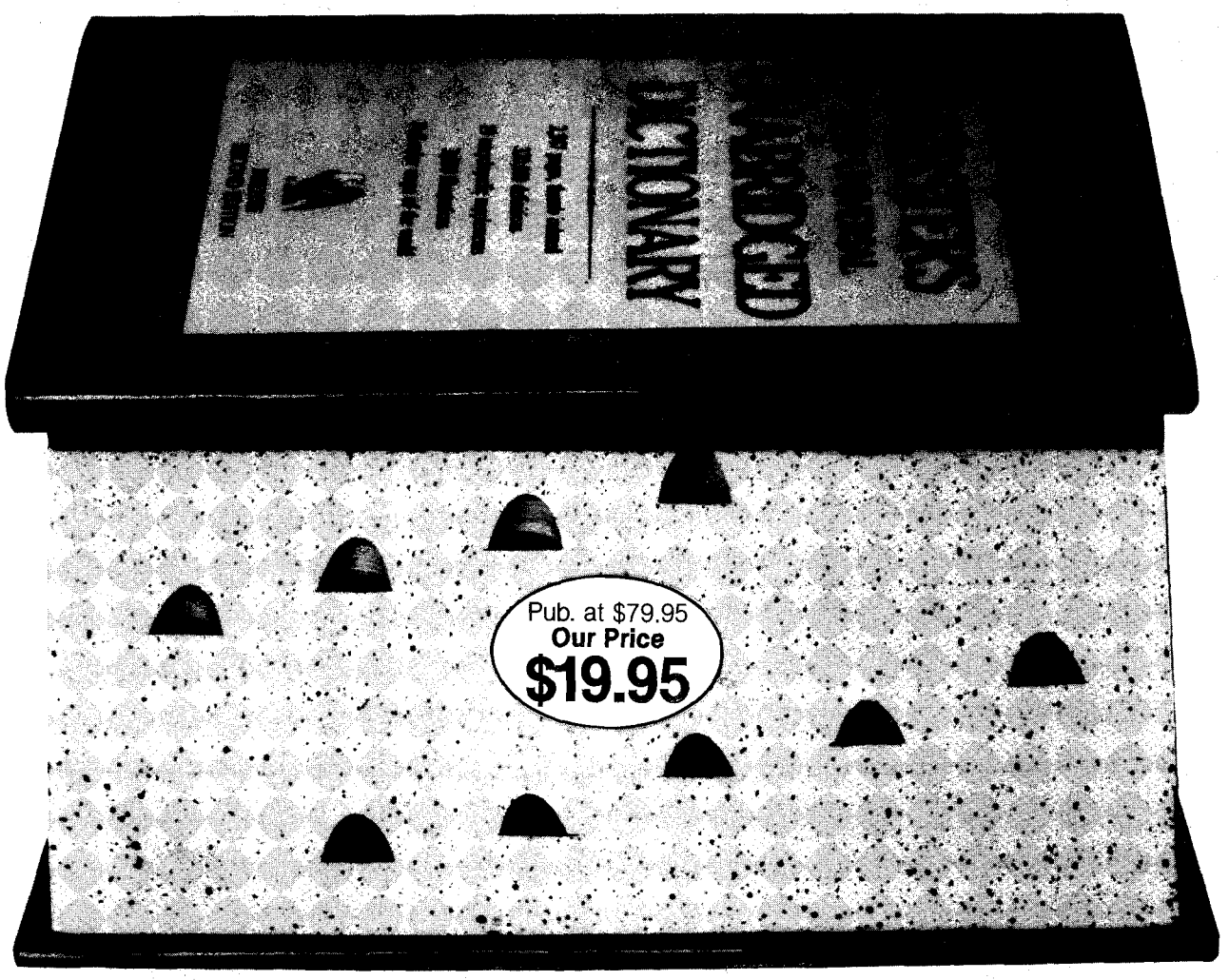

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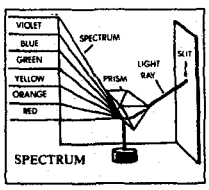

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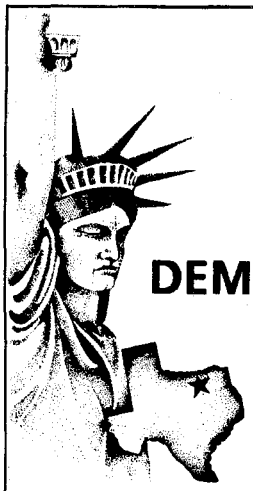

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struggle represented in the development of human consciousness and morality.

This denial—shared by white Southerners and Northerners alike—results in, at best, a partial understanding of the war. Even the most honest creative thinkers ignore whole areas of accomplishment. The absence of discussion in *Patriotic Gore* (first published in 1962) of the black literary experience of slavery—from slave biographies to spirituals—undermines Wilson's claim that his volume is a study of the war's literature, while W.E.B. Du Bois's *Black Reconstruction* remains a largely unrecognized masterpiece. A double standard judges the struggle's protagonists. Grant's bloody assaults against the Army of Northern Virginia convict him as a butcher; Robert E. Lee's murderously profligate command—"We were very lavish of blood in those days," said a Confederate general—enshrines him as a noble hero and military genius. Gen. William Sherman's march is a frequently cited horror of war; all but unknown is the fact that while tramping through Pennsylvania Lee's army captured free blacks whom the general sent back to slavery.

The recent contributions to Civil War writing have begun to correct this view. Never mind the Reaganite feel-good media brouhaha over Ken Burns's eleven-hour documentary, recently shown on PBS. This ambitious work marks an intellectual and cultural turning point. Along with James McPherson's best-selling *Battle Cry of Freedom*—to which Burns's ratings-winning documentary is deeply indebted—it climaxes a revision of Civil War history led by scholars who grew up during the civil rights movement. Emphasizing the central role of slavery and the African-American contributions to the war, the documentary, along with its superb accompanying volume and the Library of America's recent issues of Abraham Lincoln's papers and Grant's and Sherman's memoirs, opens a new, realistic perspective on the conflict the documentary's creators call "the crossroads of our being."

The great success of the Burns film is its portrayal of the raw actuality of the war, the chaos and valor of people making history: Union soldiers laughing madly as they charged the cornfield at Shiloh (madness is war's mate); Sam Watkins's clever reflections; Joshua Chamberlain's rigorous code of moral conduct; a romantic, longing love letter written by a Union soldier to his wife before the first battle of Bull Run.

The film's failure is in its interpretation of the thick, wonderful mass of material it presents. Trying to follow the complex track of conflict and compromise leading to the war, the narrative loses its way and overlooks the slaveholders' grip on the national government. Most viewers, one suspects, would have been surprised to find out that the Senate had voted Kansas into the Union as a slave state or that shortly before the war began President Buchanan advised Northern politicians to support his attempt to acquire Cuba as an additional slave state, facts that refute the charges of self-righteousness and opportunism that hound the abolitionists and Lincoln. Similarly, the series all but ignores the long history of black resistance to slavery, of which the climax was the participation of black soldiers in the Union Army. The overdependence on a few visual and aural icons—the sour-sounding fiddle that, like Pachelbel's *Canon*, became a musical cliché overnight; the recurring blood-orange dawns and dusks—was also a symptom of a lack of intellectual and emotional imagination. Is melancholy the only emotion the producers could associate with this revolution?

The book—a supplement to the series, not a rehash—is free of these failings. Like the film, the book is far from your standard introduction to the war. It criticizes Lincoln for his equivocal and dilatory Emancipation; presents Stonewall Jackson as a religious fanatic, blind to the suffering of his soldiers; and replaces the usually glamorous picture of Southern society with quotes from poor farmers griping about plantation owners and from Mary Chesnut—to her everlasting credit—applauding the Emancipation as the one thing that will make the war worthwhile.

The splendidly conceived and executed volume offers a greater scope than the documentary. The text provides more detail—a chaplain reporting that soldiers stuffed their nostrils with green leaves to shut out the smell of putrefying flesh at Spotsylvania; Douglas MacArthur's father bearing the colors up Missionary Ridge, shouting, "On, Wisconsin!"—and more photos: Soldiers display their butchered bodies with expressions of humiliation, rage or defeat; a wife or sweetheart touches her lover's sleeve, demonstrating her solidarity with him while registering her resistance to his departure; a Confederate sentry warms his hands

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over a fire outside Fredericksburg; a young Union general slouches against a tree, dressed like a journalist in a checked shirt and mangled bow tie, long saber dangling carelessly, brooding eyes challenging the camera with a knowing recklessness.

Freed from the tyranny of a spoken narrative, readers can pause at their own pace over facts, come to their own conclusions about pictures. With time, judgments shift. Grant's portrait becomes a tragic study of determination and dismay, Lee's a study in resentment and rage. The moral complexity of the war is suggested. Commentator Shelby Foote idolizes Nathan Bedford Forrest as the "most man in the world" and says he was thrilled when a relation let Foote swing the cavalryman's saber; but when we read that this future Klan member remained unrepentant over the deliberate slaughter of black troops at Fort Pillow, no cutaway distracts us from wondering how Foote ever arrived at his judgment.

Foote's casual comment is not unusual. One symptom of our national lobotomy is to dissociate the Confederate armies from their cause. At the same time, Union leaders are constantly faulted for falling short of the ideals for which they were ostensibly fighting. But more to the point about these Midwestern businessmen and farmers is their enlistment in a cause about which they were ambivalent at best. They are a study in the range of human possibility.

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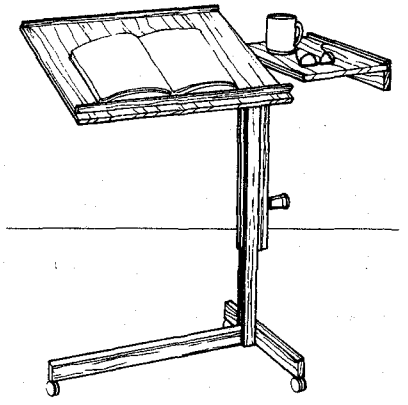

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ride with the same equanimity Sherman displays during a shipwreck—resulted from a fear of his own demons and left him with no choice but to enlist in subduing the rebellion. While sympathetic to Southern life and contemptuous of politicians, he resented both the South for dissolving the structure that had provided an orderly national life, and the "pusillanimous" national leaders who temporized as the states declared their independence. "Obedience to law, absolute—yea, even abject—is the lesson that this war . . . will teach the free and enlightened American citizen."

His resentment increased throughout the struggle. Early on, while stationed in Confederate-sympathizing Kentucky, he became convinced the war had to hurt civilians and not restrict its punishment to the battlefield. His first targets were the "young bloods," the "sons of planters, lawyers about towns, good billiard-players and sportsmen, men who never did work and never will. . . . They care not a sou for niggers, land, or anything . . . and they are the most dangerous set of men that this war has turned loose upon the world. . . . [They] must all be killed or employed by us before we can hope for peace." By the time of his famous devastating march—a move dictated by military strategy, not politics—his ire had grown monstrous, like a parent furious at his kids for the rage their bad behavior has provoked in him. "They begged hard, but I reiterated the order," Sherman writes about some prisoners he orders to walk a mine-planted road on which one of his men had been killed. He "could hardly help laughing at their stepping so gingerly along the road, where it was supposed sunken torpedoes might explode at each step."

As a book, Sherman's *Memoirs* stutters and stalls. The man is largely charmless; defensive and truculent, he is stiff with rectitude, carbuncular with rage; he evinces only flashes of humor and maintains an almost complete silence about his private life. He mourns for his 9-year-old son, who died of typhoid during the war; but he is so reticent about his romantic life that we are stunned when he tells us he is getting married (and he is so peripatetic that we wonder how his wife manages to conceive). The narrative itself is hard to navigate, interrupted by large chunks of battle orders or reports or roll calls of officers. His concluding chapter painstakingly details the best organizational structure for the army, the correct handling of the wounded ("The sick, wounded, and dead of an army are the subjects of the greatest possible anxiety, and add an immense amount of labor to the well men") and the amount of provisions a soldier needs to live on per day.

Grant, on the other hand, controls his narrative from the first sentence. "My family is American," he starts, "and has been for generations, in all its branches, direct and collateral." Eight hundred pages later his farewell—written several days before his death—blesses the Southerners who have wished him well.

This purposive clarity is not a literary performance but an extension of a quality of mind. "You say you were at a loss to ascribe a meaning to the blank lines in my first letter," he writes his future wife, Julia, about a missive that was signed, "Your . . . Obt. Friend." "Nothing is easyer, they were only intended to express an attachment which words would fail to express." From the first page of the *Memoirs* you are in the presence of the true Twainian strain: ironic, dry, modest, the voice of a sort of Woody Allen of the frontier. "The war had begun," he tells us early on about the Mexico campaign. "What General Taylor's feelings were during this suspense I do not know; but for myself, a young second-lieutenant who had never heard a hostile gun before, I felt sorry that I had enlisted." Later he crosses the Isthmus of Panama on one of those murderous voyages to California: "At intervals the rain would pour down in streams, followed in not many minutes by a blazing, tropical summer's sun. . . . I wondered how any person could live many months in Aspinwall, and wondered still more why any one tried."

These characteristics remain constant throughout his story. He has a genuine revulsion toward violence—his one-paragraph, deadly realistic description of a bullfight reduces all of Hemingway to the merest cant—and, unlike Sherman, he doesn't overlook the suffering of soldiers. And he can use his humor to disarm his critics. "*Ifs* defeated the Confederates at Shiloh," he writes, mocking those who argued that he won the battle by luck. "There is little doubt that we would have been disgracefully beaten *if* all the shells and bullets fired by us had passed harmlessly over the enemy and *if* all of theirs had taken effect."

Like Sherman, Grant has interesting psychological complexities: Fearing failure, he perseveres even against inordinate odds; a pre-emptive response, an itch for action, carries him through the war, his

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successes fortifying his optimism. Yet unlike the redheaded general for whom Grant was a hero, Grant has a deep political understanding of the war. A Democrat when the conflict begins—he didn't vote for Lincoln—he is a staunch Republican, what would have been called a "black Republican," by its end. For him the war is full of meaning: The Union armies are models of democracy ("This army is composed of intelligent, reading, thinking men," he answers a petitioner inquiring whether Democratic papers would be allowed to circulate inside the army, "capable of forming their own judgment") and the Confederacy is an autocracy that demeans all human labor. He trusts Lincoln, the politician; pursues a strategy that will yield a Republican victory in 1864; and champions Emancipation and the enlistment of blacks as soldiers.

Yet even this brave and decent man falters after the war; unpossessed by ideology and lacking any guide—without, one fears, Lincoln—he flounders. "[The colored man] was brought to our shores by compulsion, and he now should be considered as having as good a right to remain here as any other class of our citizens," he explains, and he goes on to say that this consideration had made him suggest the United States annex Santo Domingo as a haven for blacks.

Lincoln completes the triumvirate; his devotion to the cause of labor—he's the poorest of the three, the one with the hardest background—finds expression in his persistent attack against the slave society; his solidarity with labor eventually leads him to the cause of Emancipation.

"I would not have the anniversaries of our victories celebrated, nor those of our defeats made fast days and spent in humiliation and prayer," writes Grant, complaining even back then of the tendency to discount Northern victories, "but I would like to see truthful history written. Such history will do full credit to the courage, endurance and soldierly ability of the American citizen, no matter what section of the country he hailed from. . . . The justice of the cause which in the end prevailed, will, I doubt not, come to be acknowledged by every citizen of the land, in time."

One isn't rehashing battles by reexamining the war. The war isn't "the crossroads of our being" because it raises issues of expansion, corruption and federal power—these are embodied in endless other episodes in our history. The war continues to arouse our imagination and feelings because it incarnates the central conflict that distinguishes us as a nation. What, after all, do the Koreans and Indians and Russians who are our nation's newest members have in common with the Scotch-Irish and German men and women captured in desperate poses in Burns's documentary? They don't share a similar past or language—they don't even bring the same hopes and ideals to their newly adopted country. But they do face the same challenge, to realize democracy's promise of a just society that includes all citizens, even the most excluded and the most oppressed. Slavery and race matter in discussions of the war not only for reasons of the past but also for reasons of the present: The confrontation with race is the crucible of our national character, the magnet that brings all of us together, the struggle that makes us Americans. □

Apology for Archie

HAYWOOD BURNS

THE CLOSEST OF STRANGERS: Liberalism and the Politics of Race in New York. *By Jim Sleeper. Norton. 345 pp. $21.95.*

In *The Closest of Strangers: Liberalism and the Politics of Race in New York*, Jim Sleeper has written a greatly disappointing book. It is disappointing because the book whets our appetite with issues of vital importance and some of the hottest of New York City's recent political events, and then serves them up in such a way that true proponents of racial justice will be left with a bad taste in their mouth. It is disappointing because Sleeper brings to the task a wealth of experience in New York life and politics as an organizer, public servant and journalist as well as an obvious, genuine love for the city and a desire to see it fulfill its grand potential as a "gorgeous mosaic." Yet he manages to produce a work that is terribly flawed in its treatment of fundamental issues of race and politics.

The book begins with a brief history of race and politics, emphasizing the postwar years and especially recent ones. Sleeper views the New York experience through various prisms—housing, welfare, schools, criminal justice, electoral politics—and concludes that the fight for racial justice since the 1960s has been waged in the wrong way. He thinks the race card has been overplayed; that the nature of the problem has been distorted by activists who operate as if New York were "Up South." He tells us that the politics of racial confrontation they have pursued are both the product of, and are responsible for, a whole range of bad public policy and have generated a white backlash. In their stead he calls for a race-transcendent politics that appeals to what he says is a New York tradition of fair play and decency, and he urges a closing of ranks around issues of common concern involving economic deprivation and community-based power.

One of the fundamental flaws in Sleeper's analysis can be seen in his presentation of the historical background. He would have us believe that American slavery was just a "variant" of other forms of economic exploitation. His failure to grasp the unique nature of slavery in this country explains in part his failure of vision with respect to the racism that it engendered. Sleeper does not comprehend the social pathology of racism, its enduring pervasiveness or what it will take to excise it from the body politic.

He accuses black people, liberals and those on the left of making too much of racism. But he makes much too little of it. Sleeper says that we have not been willing to understand the legitimate rage of residents of white ethnic neighborhoods, who have had to make more sacrifices in response to the changes brought about by the civil rights movement than the "limousine liberals" who live in white upper-class enclaves. Be that as it may, he is much too ready to accept white ethnics' denials that they are prejudiced and much too ready to excuse their behavior. Understanding the roots of racism doesn't have to lead to condoning it; nor should it excuse whites on the left from trying to change other whites' racist beliefs and practices. As it is, the author opines that "white ethnics are right enough" in their view that "there is more bad among blacks than among whites." The book is one long apology for Archie Bunker.

Sleeper either does not appreciate the full meaning of racism or he is so mired

Haywood Burns is dean of the City University of New York Law School at Queens College.

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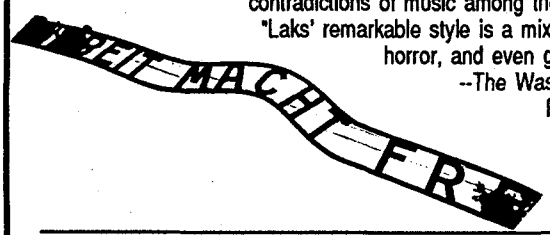

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in it that he is incapable of separating himself from it. For example, he dismisses the idea of "institutional racism"—when all around us actions, attitudes and institutional structures subordinate people of color along racial lines without using race itself as the subordinating mechanism. Though evidence of institutional racism abounds in the operation of seniority systems in the workplace, segregated neighborhood schools and aspects of the criminal justice system, Sleeper fails or refuses to acknowledge its reality or the damage it does to black people. And he is naïve about it; he thinks, for example, that the presence of a black mayor and a black police commissioner means that the problem of biased testing for police department jobs will simply disappear.

His vision on race and racism is so limited that he views black-on-black crime as disconnected from history and any other social reality and calls it "autogenocide." Conveniently ignoring the historical and contemporary ravages of racism on anyone who is black and American, Sleeper wants to place the blame for black-on-black crime upon blacks. The relationship of learned self-hate and rage at white racism to this phenomenon eludes him.

In Sleeper's world, civil rights activism and the programs, policies and institutions it has created are the source of New York's racial tensions. The villains are liberals and leftists. Thus, between the pages of this one book the author manages to slam the A.C.L.U., *The Nation*, the National Welfare Rights Organization, the black press, affirmative action, busing, the Voting Rights Act, William Kunstler, Norman Mailer and Ramsey Clark, to name but a few.

One of our greatest failures, Sleeper claims, is that we have turned unnecessarily to courts for solutions to problems that should have been worked out politically without so much emphasis on race. But law is too valuable an arrow in our quiver to be ignored, and it has accomplished so much. At the same time, other strategies should be used when they can be effective—including the kind of community organizing Sleeper favors. Using law to promote social change and organizing for that end are not opposites; rather, they support each other.

The law is not Sleeper's strong point. Either he doesn't understand constitutional democracy and the workings of our legal system or he opposes significant aspects of them. Displaying little appreciation for the role of public defenders or our adversarial system of justice, he takes legal-aid lawyers to task for being more concerned with their clients than with the victims. He criticizes a federal judge in a school desegregation case for not properly reading the "mood" of the parents—as if he didn't know that federal judges are supposed to read the Constitution and the law; rights are not supposed to be decided by referendums or opinion polls.

But then, Sleeper does not seem to be that big on rights either. He casually tosses aside even the most rudimentary notions of entitlement to due process and a fair procedure before the termination of a right to housing or a right to an education when those being terminated are what he deems "undesirable families" in public housing or "undesirable" students in public schools. In fact, he is hostile to the concept of rights altogether, unless they are accompanied by behavior, values and a life style that is consistent with his notion of what a responsible citizen should be. The idea that people have certain rights by virtue of their personhood or citizenship seems alien to him. Decency and a sense of responsibility are wonderful traits, and New Yorkers could use more of them—but their rights should not depend on them.

No less disturbing, *The Closest of Strangers* is full of racial insults, name calling, condescension, patronizing remarks and the author's misshapen presumptions of his own correctness and omniscience. Whatever one thinks about the term "African-American" as opposed to "black," who in these times would use the term "Negro" to describe Americans of African descent, as Sleeper does in several instances in his book? To Sleeper, the views of Kenneth Clark, the eminent black psychologist, are "simplistic." Long-time Brooklyn activist Jitu Weusi is "a gentle giant" who has been "badly confused." So have civil rights lawyers. It is strange that a book that champions racial peace and a return to civic discourse should be so meanspirited and nasty.

Sleeper, of course, is not confused. He not only knows what is good and what is not for race and politics in New York but he knows what is going on in the minds of black people about whom he writes, even when he has no evidence. He takes the liberty of putting these thoughts into words. A particularly offensive example is the "quote" Sleeper invents as representing the mental workings of a Brook-

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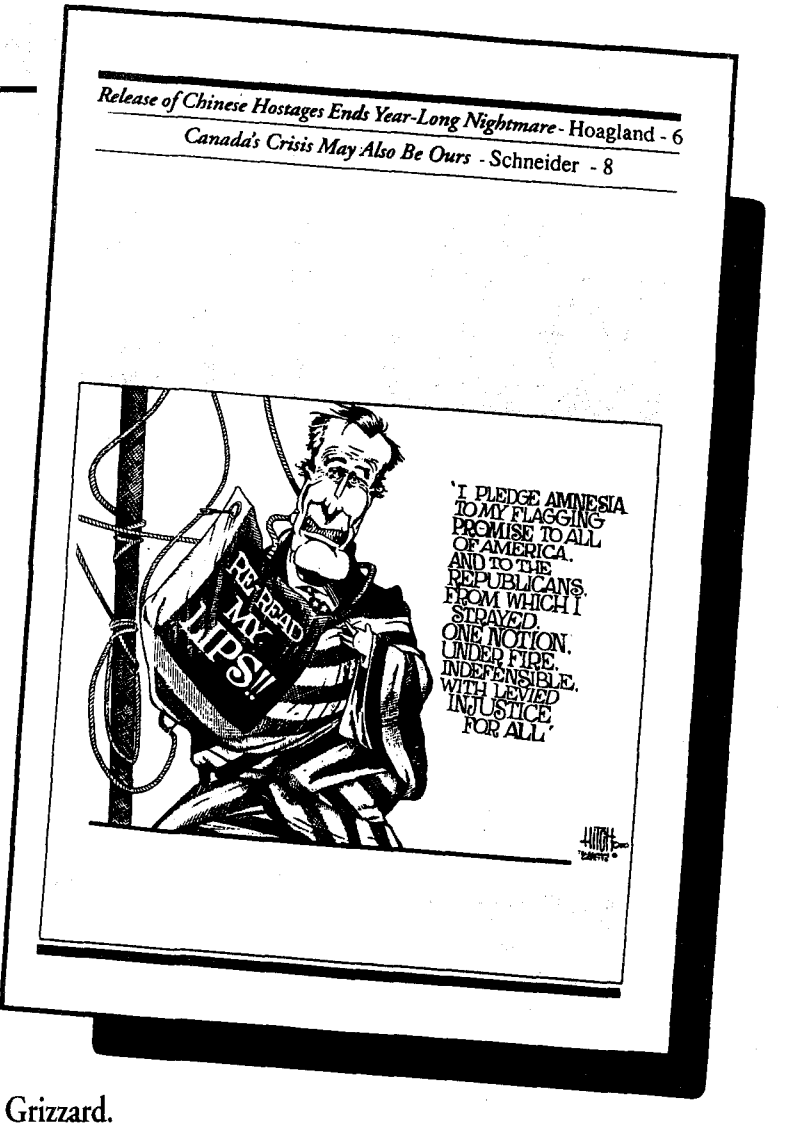
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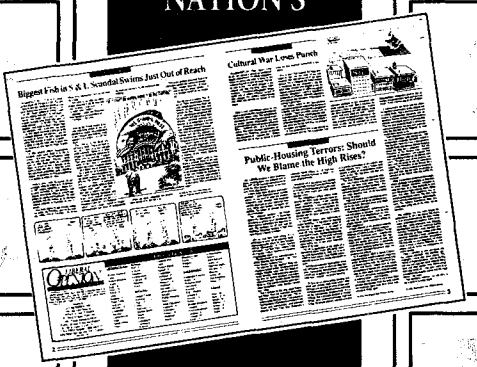
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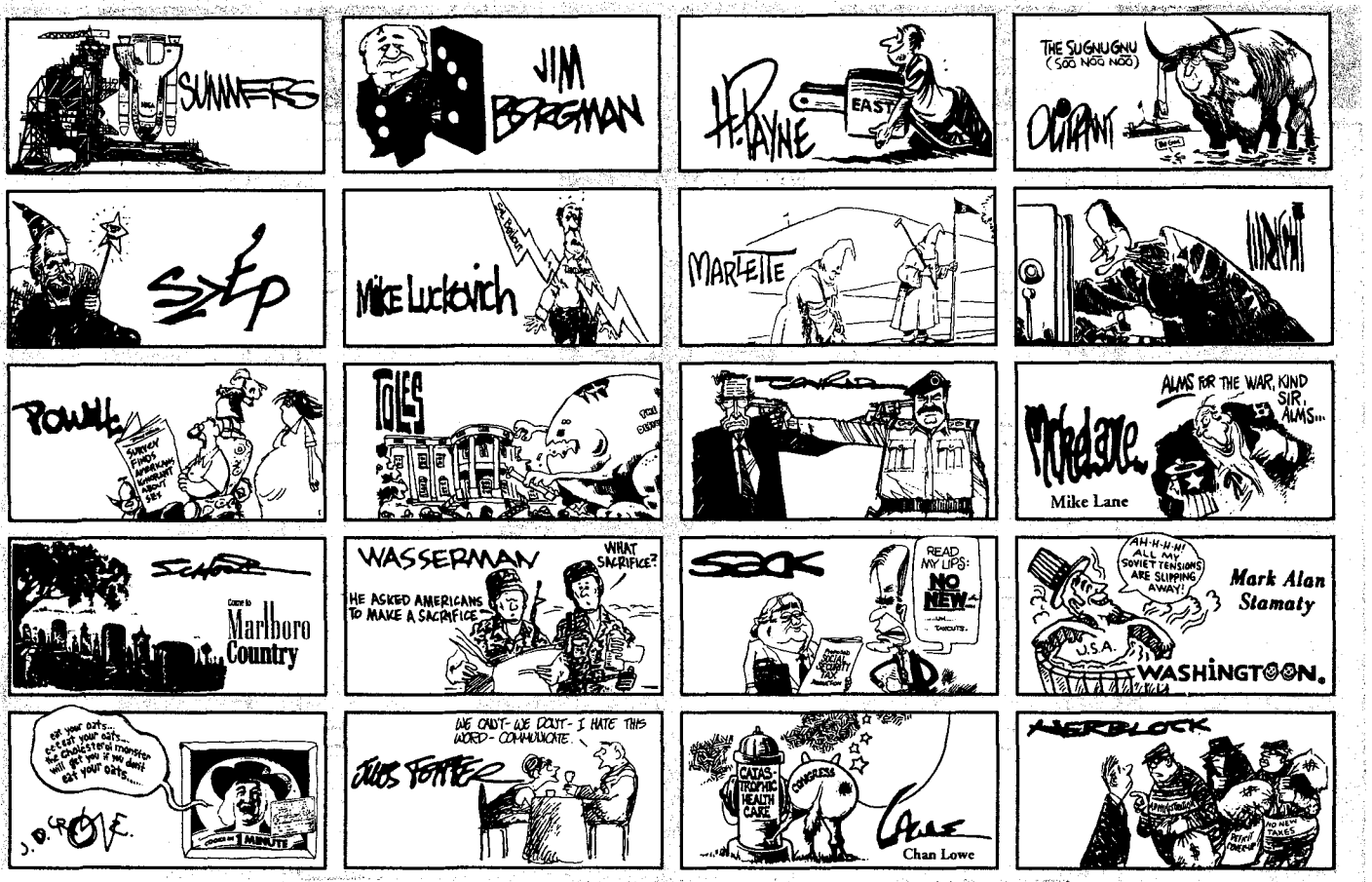

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lyn black political figure, complete with racially stereotypical jive talk of the worst kind ("Let me handle whitey; you know he hates us, but I'll cop us what we need to get by"). Turning curbstone analyst, he tells us that the Rev. Herbert Daughtry and the Rev. Calvin Butts, two civil rights leaders, have an "unconscious need for powerlessness"—how else to explain their constant involvement in the politics of confrontation?

Sleeper criticizes the U.S. Supreme Court's one-person, one-vote decision, which has brought about a reorganization of the New York City Council to make it properly reflect the constituents it serves. In a particularly odious comparison, he likens the redrawing of district lines to make the election of minority representatives more likely to the creation of bantustans. The hated bantustans of South Africa were created to deny blacks political access and to exclude them from participation in central government, while legal efforts to assure that districts will not dilute minority voting power do just the opposite.

Whom does Sleeper like? Well, he tells us that Ed Koch, "stripped of his rhetoric," was a comparatively liberal mayor. No small qualification when it comes to Koch, whose racist demagoguery has poisoned New York's political life. The old George Wallace, "stripped of his rhetoric," might be described the same way. Sleeper is also quite positive in his assessment of David Dinkins's mayoral campaign and its coalition building across racial lines.

He likes the Saul Alinsky–inspired Industrial Areas Foundation and people it has trained, particularly the East Brooklyn Congregations and one of its principal leaders, the Rev. Johnny Ray Youngblood. He presents them as examples of race-transcendent politics as, through solidarity and good organizing, they successfully take on the powers that be without resorting to racial confrontation. That's fine, of course, but it should not preclude efforts by these people or others to attack racism directly and call it by its right name. A race-transcendent politics is most likely to succeed when the white community takes responsibility for overcoming its racism, not when the black community decides to forget about it.

Sleeper is capable of beautiful, lyrical evocations of city life, especially in the neighborhoods, or at least the white neighborhoods. He might really have something helpful to tell us about white ethnics—their feelings, fears and frustrations—and also about the shortcomings of the left and liberals in criticizing their own. Unfortunately, the book is so full of blame for the victim—the black poor—and gratuitous and unwarranted attacks upon those who have tried hardest to alleviate their pain that it is difficult to filter out a constructive message. Sadly, in a city aching for mutual understanding, unity and racial harmony, Jim Sleeper leaves too many of us just as he found us—the closest of strangers. □

Criticism Is Not a Luxury

JULIE ABRAHAM

THE SAFE SEA OF WOMEN: Lesbian Fiction 1969–1989. *By Bonnie Zimmerman. Beacon Press. 272 pp. $24.95.*

LESBIAN TEXTS AND CONTEXTS: Radical Revisions. *Edited by Karla Jay and Joanne Glasgow. New York University Press. 393 pp. $45. Paper $15.*

Lesbians have always had to be particularly determined, adept and creative readers if they wanted to see themselves represented in print. Lesbian criticism has long been carried on outside the university as a kind of individual, one-woman-against-the-odds venture. This could require scouring the local library and bookstore shelves; attentively following biographers' references to "friendships" and reviewers' wary praise for the compassionate treatment of "difficult subjects"; and also occasionally boldly claiming the merely potential as well as more likely hostages. As lesbian novelist Lee Lynch comments in "Cruising the Libraries," her contribution to Karla Jay and Joanne Glasgow's new collection of critical essays, *Lesbian Texts and Contexts: Radical Revisions*,

> Traditionally, Clue Number One would always be marital status. . . . Single was suspect and sometimes proof. Of course, married people were not safe either. We knew all about marriages of convenience. . . . Cover photographs were scrutinized for short hair on women, a pinky ring, and the indefinable "look" we sought on everyone. . . . It was all guesswork on my part: a photograph of no-frills Willa Cather; the literary whisper of a close friendship between Virginia Woolf and Vita Sackville-West; the frank, unabashed eyes and crew cut of Gertrude Stein.

Such individual searches also contributed to a history of community building that informs Bonnie Zimmerman's new study, *The Safe Sea of Women: Lesbian Fiction 1969–1989*. Women would give copies of the century's best-known lesbian novel, Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* (1928), to their particular friends as a way of suggesting that more than friendship was possible. In her "biomythography," *Zami*, Audre Lorde describes the "gay girls" of Greenwich Village in the 1950s passing around copies of the lesbian pulp paperbacks of the era, books with titles like *Odd Girl Out*, *Women in the Shadows*, *Strange Are the Ways of Love* and jacket copy that promised entry into "that outcast world of 'twilight' love."

But in *The Safe Sea of Women* Zimmerman describes an alternative literature that began to appear in the late 1960s with the women's and gay liberation movements, and that was then fueled by the development of a specifically lesbian feminist politics and the appearance of independent feminist and lesbian journals and presses. In explicit contrast to "that outcast world," this new lesbian writing offered the promise of a self-consciously affirmative community. While literary works were central to the new feminist and lesbian feminist politics, a more formal lesbian feminist criticism also began to develop in the late 1960s and during the 1970s.

Until this fall, you could count on one hand the number of books of lesbian literary criticism, despite the central role of writing, particularly fiction, in twentieth-century lesbian history, and despite the achievements of feminist criticism and women's studies over the past two decades. This might be enough to prove that feminist criticism and women's studies have not been the lesbian plots they were once (and perhaps in some circles still are) supposed. Or it might reflect a particularly careful battle plan, whereby the Amazon force will not reveal itself until its goals have been achieved, the canon imploded and the academy under

Julie Abraham teaches English and women's studies at Emory University. Her book "Damned, and Carefully Public": Modern Lesbian Narrative *is forthcoming from Cornell University Press.*

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entirely new management. But unfortunately the explanation is simpler and less fun. Homophobia and heterosexism are imprecise explanatory terms for quite specific effects: fear of harassment, humiliation and unemployment; and the experience of harassment, humiliation and unemployment.

The essay became the characteristic form of lesbian criticism, both because the field was developing quickly and perhaps because an essay requires less of a commitment from the writer. The provocative critical readings were often the work of novelists or poets, or academics who produced one essay on a lesbian subject (sometimes even in a discipline other than their own) and then moved back to safer territory. And though the novelists, poets and activists continued to write through the late 1970s and into the 1980s, eventually only the occasional academic essay appeared. After a promising beginning, there was a dreadful pause.

This pause has now been broken. Feminist criticism discovered the twentieth century, where it's hard to avoid the lesbians and, after all the new biographies, harder still to claim reasonable doubt as to their proclivities. More feminist critics have tenure now. Straight feminists are now discussing lesbians. Lesbian critics are again coming out of the closet. A new generation of gay male and feminist critics has begun to provide a new gay male and antihomophobic criticism. Lesbian criticism is even catching up with academic trends: Now it's getting theory. And publishers are catching on; Beacon, Routledge, and New York University and Columbia University presses are producing more in lesbian and gay studies. Fourteen hundred people attended the fourth annual Lesbian, Bisexual and Gay Studies Conference at Harvard University in October. Jay and Glasgow's *Lesbian Texts and Contexts* and Zimmerman's *The Safe Sea of Women* are both particularly welcome as confirmations of these new developments.

The best-known literary lesbian of the twentieth century, Stephen Gordon, the hero/ine of *The Well of Loneliness*, vows to challenge the oppression of lesbians by writing a novel about it. Writing has had not only a central role in lesbian culture but an activist role. Both *The Safe Sea of Women* and *Lesbian Texts and Contexts* share the assumption that literary criticism is a social and political project. That assumption is reinforced by the feminism these works assume. Nicole

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Brossard writes, "If it were not lesbian, this text would make no sense." If history is not considered, lesbian texts, either literary or critical, do not make sense. Lesbian writing can only be understood if the reader has, first if not also last, some awareness of its political frames.

Hence Zimmerman's project of studying contemporary lesbian fiction as the expression and shaping force of the social world she—following Jill Johnston—calls Lesbian Nation. Hence also the insistence on the togetherness of "texts" and "contexts" as Jay and Glasgow's framing paradigm. Zimmerman offers a history of lesbian feminist politics and culture alongside and through the fiction of the past twenty years. Jay and Glasgow begin their collection of critical essays with personal statements from six writers who either identify themselves as lesbians or study lesbian subjects. Zimmerman declares early in *The Safe Sea of Women* her own identification with the ideal of Lesbian Nation, and she also asserts her intention to describe this world for an audience of common readers as well as fellow critics, "the academic world of women's studies and the lesbian community." So for each of these projects writers and readers are alive and well and central to the criticism.

With the notable exception of a rare collection of works published in the early 1970s by Daughters Inc.—in particular the novels of Bertha Harris and June Arnold—the literature to which Zimmerman provides a guide is alternative in subject matter rather than style. But the defiance and even celebration represented by Isabel Miller's *Patience and Sarah*, Rita Mae Brown's *Rubyfruit Jungle* and a host of other fictions, as well as a wealth of political analyses, memoirs, poetry and coming-out stories, offered "positive images" previously unavailable to lesbian readers. Zimmerman says of Brown's heroine Molly Bolt, "She represented what we were beginning to feel about ourselves, that to be a lesbian was to be daring, special, unique, and very fortunate." She goes on to chart the development of this literature through four different phases—preoccupations with the lesbian self, the lesbian couple, the lesbian community and then the critiques offered of that vision of community on the grounds of racial, class and sexual differences. This sequence, Zimmerman argues, both mirrored and shaped historical shifts within the lesbian community that can be identified partly by its allegiance to these fictions.

Zimmerman says the blander, more formulaic novels that began to appear in the later 1970s were a result of pressures imposed by the newly self-identified lesbian feminist community in its bid for unity and coherence. But her own discussions of this problem and others, including the limited presence of political fictions after the early years, the late emergence of writing by women of color and a general poverty of sexual description, do not moderate the deference to community standards that structures her own definition of her subject. Because she is dealing with the post-Stonewall period, when it was possible for an author to publish with a lesbian press or make some other coming-out statement, Zimmerman expects her lesbian fiction to be produced by writers who identify in some way with the lesbian community. The work in question must have "a central, not marginal, lesbian character, one who understands herself to be a lesbian," and must place "love between women, including sexual passion, at the center of its story." Finally, there is the matter of audience: "Lesbian novels are read by lesbians in order to affirm lesbian existence."

Zimmerman declares that her interest is in cultural myths, and her study works best as a cultural history. As such it takes its place in a tradition of writing in which novels about lesbians—in the absence of other than literary cultural artifacts—are dealt with as historical sources. And in terms of lesbian history, *The Safe Sea of Women* is perhaps more properly described, as she sometimes refers to it, as a study of lesbian feminist fiction. Certainly her Lesbian Nation is a community that is political and generational as well as sexual.

The circularity and the absence of concern for literary questions in Zimmerman's definition of her subject are striking. The identification of "lesbian fiction" with stories about women in love with each other was a common pattern well before Stonewall and is one that has never been confined to lesbian readers and has been more likely to be challenged by lesbian writers than by anyone else. Its more recent political rationale—that accessible lesbian images are necessary to lesbian readers in a repressive culture—cannot be disputed. But that has never accounted for the range of fiction lesbians produce, even as it has controlled expectations of lesbian writing more generally. This definition also obscures continuities between pre- and post-Stonewall writing, and between fiction about lesbi-

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ans by lesbians and fiction about lesbians by others. Zimmerman offers the suggestion that lesbian fiction be seen as a genre unto itself, but much of the time she is more properly describing lesbian romances, which might more usefully be considered a subcategory within the possibilities of lesbian writing, though hardly divorced from the romance in its usual, heterosexual guise. Even as *The Safe Sea of Women* offers an excellent guide to a particular literature produced at a very specific conjunction of literary, political and publishing possibilities, the effect of Zimmerman's framing of the subject is to maintain the narrowest possible understanding of what lesbians might do in books.

Even the work of the contemporary lesbian novelists (Valerie Miner, Lee Lynch and Maureen Brady) who contribute to the opening section of Jay and Glasgow's *Lesbian Texts and Contexts* fits only partially into Zimmerman's framework. In "Insider/Outsider Coming of Age," for example, Maureen Brady discusses the experience of living "in a space fraught with tension," being a lesbian novelist and short-story writer caught between the demands of the Lesbian Nation Zimmerman invokes and the dismissals of mainstream editors and reviewers.

Inevitably, there is in the essay collection a much broader range in the writers invoked and the possibilities of sexual definitions for critics and their subjects—from Emily Dickinson and George Eliot to Nicole Brossard, Ann Allen Shockley, Jeanette Winterson and Paula Gunn Allen. Along the way we are given new perspectives on some of those who are finally becoming the usual suspects in any consideration of modern lesbian writing—Willa Cather, Virginia Woolf, H.D. and Djuna Barnes as well as Radclyffe Hall. Kate Adams offers a discussion of the 1950s lesbian pulps—which certainly featured central lesbian characters and plenty of sex—in "Making the World Safe for the Missionary Position." She reads Claire Morgan's 1952 novel, *The Price of Salt*, in the context of complaints that year by Representative E.C. Gathings's Congressional antipornography committee, which objected to the "violence, lust, use of narcotics, blasphemy, vulgarity, pornography, juvenile delinquency, sadism, masochism, perversion, homosexuality, lesbianism, murder, rape" (sound familiar?) to be found in the new "so-called pocket-sized books." But experimental writing is also addressed: by Cassandra Laity working on H.D.'s interest in Swinburne, by Shari Benstock's discussion of "sapphic modernism," by Namascar Shaktini writing about Monique Wittig's *The Lesbian Body*, and in Alice Parker's "Nicole Brossard: A Differential Equation of Lesbian Love."

The subjects of Zimmerman's discussion and her terms—the lesbian self, the lesbian couple, the lesbian community and the internal divisions within that community—can all be traced in the essays Jay and Glasgow have collected. This reflects a certain consistency in the basic assumptions of lesbian criticism that extends beyond a shared activist ideal. The lesbian self is represented here by the individual writer we are familiar with as an isolated character in other critical frames: Dickinson, Cather, Barnes. The lesbian community, and divisions within that community, can be traced from Paris in the 1920s and 1930s to Paula Gunn Allen's contemporary attempt to create a spiritual space encompassing her Native American heritage. Class and race differences are articulated by Karla Jay, on behalf of Djuna Barnes as a working girl among the idle rich she described in the *Ladies Almanack*, and by SDiane Bogus, on behalf of the bulldagger "Queen B" in twentieth-century African-American literature. But the lesbian couple dominates as the chosen form for the representation of lesbian identity, although here the couple need not be the subject of the story: The necessary relationship between two women can flourish between the writer and her fictional subject, the critic and her writer subject, the potential reader and any number of fictional subjects or the critic and her reader.

Some of these essays, for example Judith Fetterley's account of Willa Cather's solution of "the dilemma of the lesbian writer" in *My Antonia* and Marilyn Farwell's work on the question of "lesbian narrative space," have been published before; their inclusion here represents a recognition of what has been done and offers a foundation for future work. Others, such as Elizabeth Meese's "Theorizing Lesbian: Writing—A Love Letter," deriving in part from the work of French Canadian and French writers such as Wittig and Brossard, as well as from the deconstructionist critical theory of Jacques Derrida, are presented as part of new projects, the conclusions of which we can look forward to.

As Jay and Glasgow note in their introduction, many of their readers will have other essays they would have liked to see republished in this context. To strengthen the collection as a representation of the field, past and present, I would begin with Elaine Marks's "Lesbian Intertextuality"; Gillian Whitlock's " 'Everything Is Out of Place': Radclyffe Hall and the Lesbian Literary Tradition"; Catharine Stimpson's "Zero Degree Deviancy: The Lesbian Novel in English," and perhaps some of her work on Gertrude Stein; Teresa de Lauretis's "Sexu-

WHAT THEY TAUGHT ME IN SOLEDAD

"You have to take what the court says.
Your face may change; you may curse
or scream: the cell door clangs."
I was a child of anger.

One day a visitor gave me a sweater
and they let me wear it. I walked my cell
and touched everything in succession, felt
the stone, ran my hands over the walls,
pulled one at a time on the bars.

Guards grew old; paint on the walls
darkened. And I wanted to tell somebody,
somebody who would listen: all the time
while we live and breathe, while the paint darkens
and guards grow old—there is something else.

All that you touch can't explain what happens,
even in a cell, even while years go by.
There is something else.
I wanted to tell somebody.

William Stafford

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al Indifference and Lesbian Representation"; and Biddy Martin's "Lesbian Identity and Autobiographical Difference[s]."* But, as the existence of these two new books suggests, perhaps we have reached the point where there will be more than one collection, more than a handful of books, and a great number of new essays.

This new work will need to deal with the assumptions of the criticism reflected in Jay and Glasgow's collection as well as Zimmerman's work. We have to move beyond the old and unproductive division among the subjects of lesbian criticism between realist and experimental fiction, reflected in Zimmerman's preference for the former. It is also important that this division not be replicated in a gap between historically based and theoretical criticism. Zimmerman's definition of her subject can be contrasted with the extravagant terms Elizabeth Meese offers, in an essay that is disruptive of formal as well as lesbian critical assumptions. "Why is it," she asks, "that the lesbian seems like a shadow—a shadow with/in woman, with/in writing? A contrastive shape in a shadow play, slightly formless, the edges blurred by the turns of the field, the sheets on which a drama is projected. The lesbian subject is not all I am and it is in all I am." And at the same time, "Writing the lesbian means writing someone who does not yet exist." In the historically based work the lesbian is always a version of either Radclyffe Hall's Stephen Gordon or the girl next door, and in more theoretical work the lesbian is always becoming, regardless of what she is or has been. But the terms of such an opposition are false, and not only because *Lesbian Texts and Contexts* can contain both kinds of criticism. Both Zimmerman and Meese, whose work looks so different, assume the centrality of lesbian sexuality to lesbian representation and the marginality of the lesbian as the chief factor in the context of the writing. While not denying either, we could reconsider the implications of both propositions. How far do they constitute an acceptance of the dominant culture's definitions? To what extent do they provide a basis for understanding an already existing literature and supporting the range of contemporary work?

Even though it was necessary to search for the lesbians, that was not because lesbians were not writing. It was instead a consequence of the forms the writers used and the ways that writing was dealt with. "Love" has been the frame for popular as well as critical understandings of the possible relations between lesbians and the literary for most of this century. The role of the love story in the representation of the lesbian derives from narrative conventions governing the fictional portrayal of women—the plot of heterosexual romance—as well as medical and popular identification of the lesbian solely as a woman who engages in sexual relationships with other women—an identification the literary works then reinforce. If women as fictional subjects are foremost the subjects

* Marks in George Stambolian and Elaine Marks, eds., *Homosexualities and French Literature* (Cornell); Whitlock in *Feminist Studies* (Fall 1987); Stimpson in Catharine Stimpson, *Where the Meanings Are: Feminism and Cultural Spaces* (Routledge); de Lauretis in *Theatre Journal* (May 1988); Martin in Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenck, eds., *Life/Lines: Theorizing Women's Autobiography* (Cornell).

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emotional life, and lesbianism is foremost a form of sexual life, then the lesbian novel as a narrative of emotional/sexual experience is clearly overdetermined. But the fact that its existence seems both obvious and logical does not make it either inevitable or benign. After all, are we lesbians only when we are in love, in couples or in bed?

As of twenty years ago most lesbian writers did not write "lesbian novels." To a significant extent, that is still true. Such a choice frees the writer from certain forms of hostile attention. And those women who could claim the privileges of class and/or race and/or education were not necessarily marginalized. Virginia Woolf and Gertrude Stein lived and wrote at the center of high cultural circles; Mary Renault could be found on the best-seller lists. It might be argued that such women were still silenced, to the extent that they did not produce the kind of writing "about lesbians" that evolved into the work Zimmerman champions. But that would be to overlook the extent to which the lesbian novel is itself a compromised form—a limited frame through which lesbians gained limited representation—that could be read by friend and enemy and written by friend and enemy alike. We need to develop a more complex understanding of the relations between sexuality and literature than that implied by the assumption that everyone would have written *The Well of Loneliness* if they had been bold enough.

We also need to distinguish between representations of the lesbian and lesbian representation. Representations of the lesbian, it must be acknowledged, have been and are produced by gay and straight, female and male writers. These are primarily the lesbian novels and would include *The Well of Loneliness* but also Henry James's *The Bostonians* and Compton Mackenzie's *Extraordinary Women*; 1950s and 1960s pulp fictions such as Vin Packer's *Spring Fire*, Ann Bannon's *Women in the Shadows*, and *Strange Are the Ways of Love* (whoever wrote it); *Rubyfruit Jungle*, *Patience and Sarah* and the entire backlist of Naiad Press.

Lesbian representation would be a theoretically infinite set of possibilities for lesbian cultural, here literary, expression (all of the work lesbians did and do produce). It would include all the lesbian novels written by lesbians, but also all the novels about archbishops in the American Southwest, aspiring opera singers in Chicago, Italian waiters in London, young Irish women in 1920s Spain, young men in ancient Greece; even those parts of Gertrude Stein's work in which you cannot find the spirit of Alice B. Toklas; Woolf without as well as with Vita; the diaries of Alice Dunbar-Nelson as well as the letters of Janet Flanner (those written for *The New Yorker* and those written to her lovers); and Sarah Orne Jewett, H.D., Bryher, Angelina Weld Grimké, Sylvia Townsend Warner, Kate O'Brien, Carson McCullers, Maureen Duffy, Elizabeth Bishop. And then all of the contemporary essays, autobiographies and poetry as well as novels: Adrienne Rich, Audre Lorde, Cherríe Moraga, Gloria Anzaldúa, Marilyn Hacker, Irena Klepfisz, Joanna Russ and on and on. Even short stories would be included—Katherine Mansfield to Becky Birtha and Dorothy Allison.

If one illusion fostered by the lack of cultural recognition is absence, another is that visibility will solve the problem. Rather, we need to consider what is visible, when, on what terms, why and to whom. In *The Safe Sea of Women* Zimmerman suggests that,

> in one way, the women's or lesbian community is a "product of interpretation" in the sense that its definition and perimeters are constantly changing in response to experience and history. . . . But the community is also a product of interpretation (that is, of language or discourse) in that it is being *written* right in front of our eyes. It does not simply predate the texts that describe it. As these writers write new selves . . . so too do they write new configurations of Lesbian Nation and help create it in the world.

Obviously, these categories are overlapping and their boundaries are hardly fixed. Individual writings could occupy varying places in this schema, depending on changing critical contexts. The details of individual biographies could also be contested. There is often reluctance to refer to a writer as lesbian, whether because of lack of "proof" or a theoretical aversion to fixed identities. We can find ourselves in the interesting position of being more willing to attribute sexuality to a text than to a person.

But we need some method, if not this, to shift the whole burden of interpretation away from the stories the writings tell. Whether or not Zimmerman's Lesbian Nation can begin to contain the complexities of lesbian history and contemporary experiences, and whether or not literature remains central, "interpretation" will continue to be vital. This establishes a particular responsibility. Criticism is not a luxury. □

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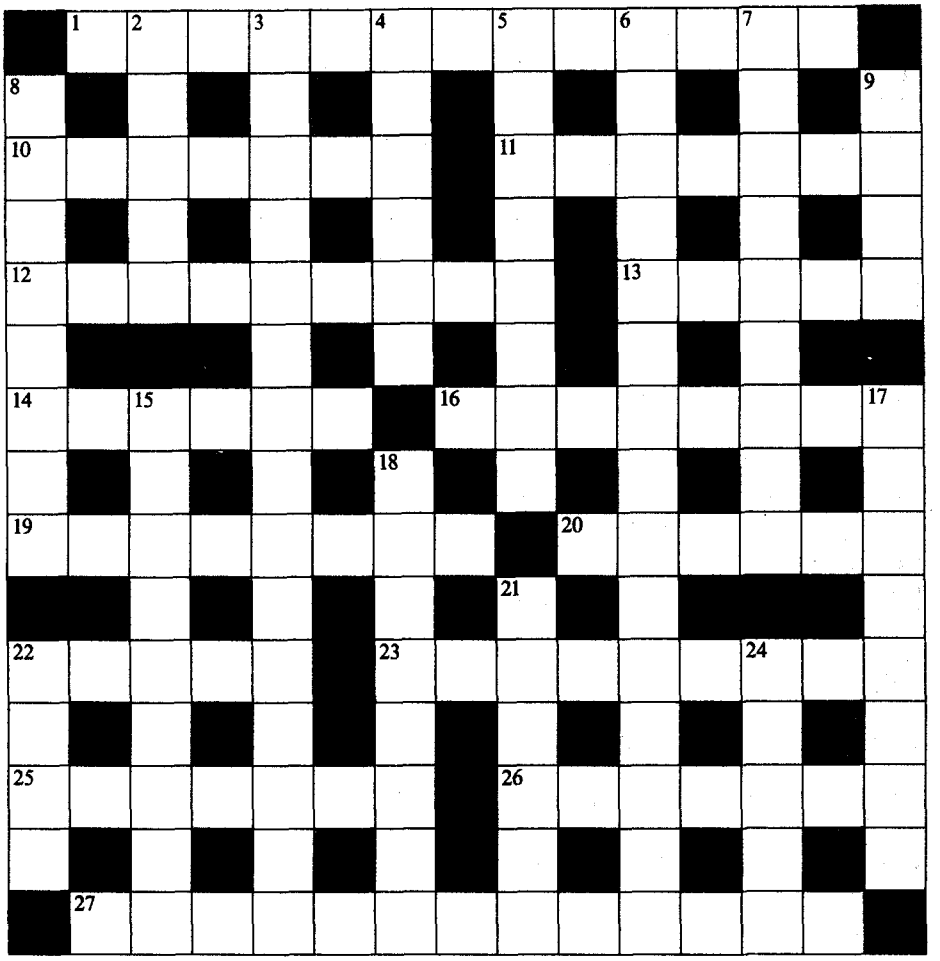

ACROSS

1 A body of offense, classically. (6,7)
10 A number of snakes and these are game to assist runaways. (7)
11 Not the incoming mail for a Legionnaire's home. (7)
12 Make a brew of tea, spying for old imperialists. (9)
13 Relieve of possessions, returning to help in a mechanical way. (5)
14 Not exactly what the Germans did with the 20—but it's no longer plain if you do. (6)
16 Audible exhalation at the sound of a bell, claimed by one as UFO-connected? (8)
19 Get too big for one's britches? Ivy might! (8)
20 Russia was a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside one, to Churchill. (6)
22 Interweave several strands for a quiet Parisian drink. (5)
23 You'll find this sort in hers, and also a Jewish legislative council. (9)
25 A well-known stadium article is put away, such as an old weapon. (7)
26 Relaxes when old Sol is not quite right, and about to yield in submission. (7)
27 It implies no flexibility in screening—at some difficulty, too! (13)

DOWN

2 Even "characters" of a kind do not behave so strangely! (5)
3 After a quiet nap, I appreciate the thing in a hip way—a rocky peak, for example. (One might wave his hand to surprise you.) (15)
4 Talk about what St. Helen's gave out! It's a moving figure of the dance! (6)
5 In we go! I stick here with self-interest! (8)
6 Bury the movie detective? General Electric can! Such things can be swapped. (15)
7 It's bothersome, but no girl is different! (9)
8 Stevenson's good doctor had one way to make George short! (5,3)
9 Does such a sign imply "Don't Touch?" (Seems the hat lost its boy!) (4)
15 Possibly a near case of "Special Delivery?" (9)
17 Last song (with variations) for openers, politically speaking. (8)
18 An English composer and a German one—bovine, for example. (8)
21 Thin cubical container of seductive spirits. (6)
22 False step for one that might be 7. (4)
24 Poe's sort of rhyme might come to ruin before the century ends. (5)

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